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IRELAND AND THE EMPIRE

Publisher's Announcement

PRESENT IRISH QUESTIONS

BY

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IRELAND
AND THE EMPIRE

A REVIEW

1800—1900

BY

T. W. RUSSELL, M.P.

FOR SOUTH TYRONE

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INTRODUCTION

THIS volume, written amid absorbing public duties, is not intended for the student. It is written for that large class of busy men and women who have neither the time nor the facilities for close historical research, but who, nevertheless, have a keen interest in, and a real desire to attain to, the truth in regard to Irish affairs. For some years it has been the fashion to decry Ireland and Irish questions. After passing through a high fever which for many years consumed the energies of England and Ireland alike, the usual exhaustion has followed. As George Macdonald has somewhere finely said, "birds cannot always sing," and it was not to be expected that after the failure of Mr. Gladstone's great effort to solve the problem, Irish affairs should continue to occupy and to hold the public mind. It must also be admitted that by a squalid controversy around the name of Mr. Parnell, Irishmen themselves contributed in no slight degree to the effacement of the Irish question. But the temperature of the patient is once more normal. The fever has burned itself out. Men of all sections of the Nationalist party have agreed to forget their differences; and a solid body of over eighty Irish members, with a mission, once more occupy the Irish benches at Westminster. Their mission in that great assembly is apparent and admitted. Mr. John Redmond, the capable and accomplished leader of the party, has made everything quite plain. The Irish members, according to Mr. Redmond, represent "a foreign element" in the House of Commons. Their presence must cause inflammation in the body politic, and general derangement in the work of the Institution. And it is intended that this should be the result. Practically the Irishmen say to England—"You destroyed our Parliament in

1800. The destruction of that National Assembly was accomplished by the most unblushing bribery, intimidation, and corruption. Ireland has never condoned that great offence. You govern us, not by love and affection, but by force and by fraud. Forty thousand armed men are necessary to maintain your supremacy. Ours is a forced and unwilling allegiance. We come to this Assembly—but are not of it. We desire to be at home governing our own land—the land of our affections, and for which alone we care. You can retain us here by force ; but in that case you must pay the price. We shall interfere in every nook and cranny of British affairs—at home and abroad. If we cannot govern our own country, we shall see whether we cannot make parliamentary institutions and the Government of England a laughing-stock before the whole world.” There is no concealment about it. This is the situation.

England is the greatest colonising power in the world ; and she is, in the main, happy in the possession of the love and the affection of her colonies and dependencies. Recent events have demonstrated this to a remarkable degree. At the first sound of danger to the Empire the sons of the Empire sprang to their feet. And from every quarter of the world, wherever the English flag waves, brave and stalwart men hurried to the point of danger. The world has witnessed no such spectacle before. And it has impressed the world. There is only one dark spot on the whole horizon. The dark spot is Ireland. Here the whole feeling of the mass of the people has been vehemently against England, and in favour of the Dutch Republics. True, Irish regiments at the front—the Dublins, the Inniskillings, the Connaught Rangers—have covered themselves with glory. True it is that Irishmen have been all over the place—at the helm of responsibility, as well as at the point of danger. Lord Roberts is a Southern ; Sir George White is from County Antrim ; Hart, French, Barton, Clery, and Mahon are all Irish names, and Irish blood courses through their veins. But in spite of this Ireland has been “agin’ the Government.” Why is it that the distant colonies rise as one man in defence of the Empire, and, as I think, of a just cause, and the Irish race at home and abroad stand out and oppose ? This is a pregnant question. It ought to be fearlessly and honestly faced. There must be some reason

for this attitude upon the part of a whole people. If it be possible to probe the wound, to discover the seat of the mischief, to raze the apparently rooted trouble from the Celtic brain, to make Ireland as loyal and contented as Scotland—to secure, in fine, a really United Empire—then no cost would be too great to ensure such a beneficent end.

I cannot help thinking, too, that the present is an appropriate time for the consideration of the whole question of the relations between England and Ireland afresh. We are beginning the work of a new century. One hundred years have passed since Pitt's great policy was consummated, since the Act of Union became a statute of the realm. The record of these years is calmly ignored by many. The modern history of Ireland is a sealed book to the majority of the English people. The real truth is, as I shall show, that seventy of these years stand out a reproach and a disgrace to England. Nothing can well be worse than the record of the English in Ireland during this period.

These years have witnessed several attempts at armed rebellion, suppressed, of course, by the superior power of England. They have seen the people, visited by a great famine, rushing from the country as if it were plague-stricken—3,841,419 having gone across the ocean in fifty years. In other words, 47 per cent of the population have fled from the country to seek bread under another flag. They have witnessed the reign of secret societies, of agrarian crime, and of endless coercion acts. They have been dominated by a land system which can only be described as systematised and legal robbery of the poor. The governed were, in the main, helots and slaves; the governors were, to a large extent, callous and heartless tyrants. England had, unasked and unbidden, taken over the government of Ireland. Where the duty was not shamefully neglected, it was exercised in the interests of a class alone. Until Mr. Gladstone arose, no subject people had ever been more basely treated or neglected by a conqueror.

It is quite true that the latter part of the century has been redeemed by great efforts to do right. No fair-minded man, anxious for the impartial truth, can deny this. But it must also be admitted that for the most part these right things have been too often wrongly done. In almost every case where great wrongs have been righted, the motive and the method

were alike bad. The reform has been achieved, not so much from a sense of justice and because the thing ought to be done—it has been achieved by what has been well called “the ringing of the chapel bell.” The Disestablishment of the Irish Church and the passing of the Land Act of 1870—the first-fruits of the Gladstonian era—received their great impetus from the Fenian movement. The Clerkenwell Explosion, whatever else it did, arrested Mr. Gladstone’s attention and assuredly forced the pace of Parliament. Similarly the Land Acts of 1881 and 1887 were due almost entirely to the Land League and the Plan of Campaign. But for the murder and outrage which disgraced the years 1880 and 1881, the great Charter of the Irish farmers, weakened and injured as it has been by shameless maladministration, could never have been passed. And it was not until the Plan of Campaign had superseded the law of the land that the Act of 1887 became possible. Similarly the Local Government Act of 1898, the greatest measure passed since the Act of Union, owes its existence on the Statute Book entirely to the Home Rule agitation. Mr. Balfour, I am aware, refuses to admit this. It is true that in the famous Dartford speech Lord Randolph Churchill promised Ireland local self-government; but the Home Rule agitation had commenced at this time. And although Lord Randolph promised “simultaneity,” the great measure was not passed until the English Act was ten years old—until a Home Rule Bill had found its way to the House of Lords. I am not writing the recent history of Ireland; but when this task is undertaken by the impartial historian, the case against England, viewed from a nineteenth-century standpoint, will be as damaging as it well can be.

I propose in this volume to review the political work of the English in Ireland during this period. Meanwhile, and here, let me ask what the situation really is to-day. Old things have assuredly passed away. The Ireland of to-day is a very different country to the Ireland, say, of 1860. Then the landlords—the English garrison in Ireland—dominated everything. They commanded the situation in both Houses of Parliament. In the House of Commons they held almost every seat. To-day they can hardly influence the return of a single man to the great assembly which must ultimately decide their fate. For a candidate in almost any part of Ireland outside Belfast to be on the side of Irish Landlordism is to seal his fate at the polling

booths. Similarly in 1860 the same class held undisputed sway in the several counties of Ireland. The Grand Jury was the County Authority. It was nominated by the High Sheriff, and was composed almost entirely of the landlord class. But this County Authority has ceased to exist, and its place has been taken by the County Council, an elected and a representative body. From this body the landlords have all but disappeared. In 1860 this class was supreme upon the Local Bench. At Petty Sessions they and not the law were "a terror to evil-doers." The Magistracy was then a close borough. The Lord-Lieutenant of the County—and this high officer was always a landlord—had the appointments in his hand, and few, save the elect, were allowed within the sacred circle. But all this has been changed. The bands have been burst; the Magistracy has been popularised; the "Old Guard" has been destroyed in the last fortress of exclusiveness that remained. The Protestant Church has been disestablished and set free—a work which cost much in labour and in feeling. But the work was worth all it cost. And instead of an effete and privileged church shirking Christian work and injuring religion by its position in the country, we have a free and living community doing God's work with a will and with the good wishes and respect of every class in the country. The Land Question, too, has travelled far since the days when the Report of the Devon Commission was scouted—when Sharman Crawford lifted up his voice in vain. Something still remains to be done ere the last lap of the journey is covered. But the difference since the pre-1870 days, when Deasy and Contract ruled, is enormous. The difference is between Serfdom and Freedom.

Everything, then, is working, not to some "far off," but to a "Divine event" near at hand. The people are being drawn closer together. The community of interest on the land question, the meeting of different parties and creeds on local boards, the wide diffusion of newspapers and other forms of literature, are all telling in one direction; and, more than all, a common feeling that Ireland requires the aid of all her sons is growing. The continued flow of emigration also gives pause to the most blatant of the West Britons. Many years ago, after a visit to Ireland, Carlyle, writing to Emerson, in his blunt and brutal fashion, said, "blacklead these two million idle

beggars and sell them in Brazil." The "beggars" have gone with a vengeance, not to Brazil, but to the United States and to the English colonies. And still they go in their thousands. It is now in some parts of the country all but impossible to secure the services of a labouring man, and the domestic servant question is becoming more and more acute. And wherever these thousands have gone they are enemies to England. I remember, some years ago, discussing the Irish question with some distinguished Americans in the city of New York. I was, of course, pleading the Unionist cause. But I shall never forget the rebuke courteously administered by one of the company who bore an honoured name in American history—"Mr. Russell," he said, "there is more in this Irish question than you appear to realise. We Americans desire the question settled, not because we wish harm to England, but in order that American politics may be clear of it. It complicates everything here as well as in Great Britain. So please hurry up and solve the problem." This is quite true. By our methods in Ireland we have sown dragons' teeth in every quarter of the world. An "understanding" with America—which is Mr. Chamberlain's day-dream in foreign statesmanship—is rendered impossible because of Carlyle's "idle beggars" dumped down in the States by tens of thousands, owing to the cruel land system which obtained for so long in Ireland.

Certain it is we pay dearly, alike in meal and in malt, for our method of governing Ireland. For seventy years of the last century Ireland was governed wholly in the interests of a class. The people never had one moment's consideration. The famine, one of those mysterious dispensations by which Providence asserts great principles, was ruthlessly used in the same interests. But Nemesis, long on the road, has at last arrived. The people are now supreme, alike in Parliament and in the country. Household suffrage and government in the interests of a class cannot permanently exist together. The whole Irish question was settled when the vote was conferred, in the expressive language of the peasantry, on every "smoke"—*i.e.* upon every cabin from which the smoke of the turf fire ascends. This is the great fact of the age. This is what in the end will settle everything. The two races which inhabit Ireland will not for ever remain apart, scowling at each other across years of bitter memories. The Protestant will not for ever stand

shivering on the banks of the Boyne ; the Roman Catholic will not always recall the penal laws. No ; they are joining hand in hand even now for common objects. In due time each will learn that much can be conceded with little or no real sacrifice. And when this lesson has been truly learned, Ireland will have real freedom, England will be released from the grip of a nightmare, and the Empire will be really united.

T. W. R.

August 1901.

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CHAPTER I

FROM THE UNION TO EMANCIPATION, 1800-1829

THE Bill which abolished the Irish Parliament and established the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland was passed in the Irish House of Commons on the 7th of June 1800. No more fateful measure ever received the Royal assent. There were those, like Plunket, who questioned the competency of the Irish Parliament thus to decree its own extinction; there were others, like Grattan and Foster, who foretold failure and disaster as the result of what they deemed to be national perfidy. "The unbribed intellect of Ireland," as Mr. Lecky has finely and truly said, was wholly against the statute; and some future English historian may yet have the courage and the candour to declare that Pitt's great conception, by which a loyal Parliament was abolished and a discontented nation ensured, brought not peace but a sword to Ireland. As things stand, and writing one hundred years after the event, it is safe to say that few people of the present day—outside the Irish Nationalist ranks—have given any, even the most cursory, consideration to the transactions which culminated in

the Union. The topic is not one which invites the attention of the predominant partner. English people, speaking generally, have a dim sort of idea that they made a great sacrifice in taking a poor and troublesome country like Ireland into the Imperial partnership, and they are at an utter loss to understand why such generosity on their part should go unappreciated by the mass of the Irish people. This is the spirit which has worked, and still works, for mischief in Irish affairs. The object of England in pressing the Union was quite clear, and, from the standpoint of empire, perfectly defensible; the methods applied to securing the Union were odious, shameful, and utterly immoral. With war and rumours of war all around; with a serious rebellion running its course; with the French one day off Bantry Bay, and on another marching from Killala to Castlebar; with the mass of the people, then as now, hostile to British interests,—it is easy to understand the attitude of English Ministers, and the urgency with which they pressed Lord Cornwallis and their agents in Ireland. But to maintain, as many Unionists endeavour to maintain to-day, that the Union was dictated out of regard to Irish interests, that national bankruptcy was impending in that country—which was Lord Clare's contention—and that the Union was vital to the very existence of Ireland, is a proposition not capable of historical proof. The truth, in fact, is all the other way. Nothing, for example, is more capable of demonstration than the extraordinary prosperity which Ireland enjoyed from 1782 to 1800. This prosperity was, of course, marred,

checked, and interfered with by the Rebellion of 1798. But it is unquestionable that from 1782, when the English Parliament solemnly and formally renounced all claim or title to make laws for Ireland, until 1798, when the Great Rebellion broke out, the prosperity of Ireland was phenomenal. Lord Clare was one of the stoutest advocates of the Union. Speaking in 1798 of the period under review his Lordship said: "There is not a nation on the face of the habitable globe which has advanced in cultivation, in agriculture, in manufactures, with the same rapidity, in the same period, as Ireland." Lord Plunket, a vehement anti-Unionist, speaking in the Irish Parliament in 1799, said: "A little island, with a population of four or five millions of people, hardy, gallant, and enthusiastic, possessed of all the means of civilisation, agriculture, and commerce, well pursued and understood; a constitution fully recognised and established; her revenues, her trade, her manufactures thriving beyond the hope or the example of any other country of her extent; within these ten years, advancing with a rapidity astonishing even to herself; not complaining of deficiency even in these respects, but enjoying and acknowledging her prosperity;—she is called upon to surrender them all to the control of—whom? Is it to a great and powerful continent, to whom Nature intended her as an appendage—to a mighty people totally exceeding her in all calculation of territory or population? No! but to another happy little island, placed beside her in the bosom of the Atlantic, of little more than double her territory and population, and possessing resources not nearly so superior

to her wants." The Bankers of Dublin, a body of undoubted weight, held a meeting on December 18, 1798, at which the following resolutions were passed: "Resolved, first, that since the renunciation of the power of Great Britain in 1782 to legislate for Ireland, the commerce and prosperity of this kingdom have eminently increased. Second, that we attribute these blessings, under Providence, to the wisdom of the Irish Parliament." The Guild of Merchants met on January 14, 1799, and passed a resolution declaring "that the commerce of Ireland has increased, and her manufactures improved, beyond example, since the independence of this kingdom was restored by the exertions of our countrymen in 1782."

These are substantial authorities. But Pitt's great speech (Feb. 1799) in the House of Commons puts the question beyond the region of controversy. Having quoted a speech delivered by Mr. Foster in the Irish Parliament in 1785 to the following effect: "Britain imports annually £2,500,000 of our products, all, or very nearly all, duty free, and we import almost a million of hers, and raise a revenue on almost every article of it," he went on to say: "But how stands the case now (1799)? The trade at this time is infinitely more advantageous to Ireland. It will be proved from the documents I hold in my hand, as far as relates to the mere interchange of manufactures, that the manufactures exported to Ireland from Great Britain in 1797 very little exceeded £1,000,000 sterling (the articles of produce amount to nearly the same sum); whilst Great Britain, on the other

hand, imported from Ireland to the amount of more than £3,000,000 in the manufacture of linen and linen yarn, and between two and three millions in provisions and cattle, besides corn, and other produce."

An examination of the facts and figures of the entire period puts the matter beyond dispute. And, whatever may be said for or against the Union on political grounds, it is indisputable that Ireland enjoyed a much needed and amazing prosperity under the auspices of what has been called "Grattan's Parliament." We shall see by and by what followed upon the Union.

Meanwhile, and for the purposes of this volume, it is necessary briefly to examine some of the methods by which the Union was secured. Those who desire to master, not alone the motives, but the *modus operandi* of English statesmen in regard to this great event, cannot do better than study the *Cornwallis Correspondence*. Lord Cornwallis was Lord-Lieutenant during the greater part of this eventful period of shame and ignominy. What he thought of it all has been clearly set forth by his own pen. Writing to Major-General Ross under date May 20, 1799, when the Union intrigue was at its height, His Excellency said: "The political jobbery of this country gets the better of one; it has ever been the wish of my life to avoid all this dirty business, and I am now involved in it beyond all bearing, and am consequently more wretched than ever. I trust that I shall live to get out of this most cursed of situations, and most repugnant to my feelings. How I long to kick those whom my public duty obliges me to court!

If I did not hope to get out of this country, I should most earnestly pray for immediate death. No man, I am sure, ever experienced a more wretched existence ; and, after all, I doubt whether it is possible to save the country.”¹ Sadder words were probably never penned by any English statesman, and it is greatly to be feared that “political jobbery” holds the field, of course on a more limited scale, at Dublin Castle in 1901 just as effectively as it did in 1799. Successive viceroys have found that the English garrison in Ireland is not easily paid off and discharged.

But there are several questions which, even to-day, are of importance to the political student, and which will bear examination. The attitude of Irish Protestants to the Union is well known. When it was first proposed they met it with pronounced hostility. Writing on January 7, 1799, the Marquis of Ely, who was subsequently squared by money compensation and a step in the peerage, said : “Its great and only advocates are men who do not belong to us, or absentees who never again intend to visit Ireland.”

The Irish House of Commons, a purely Protestant assembly, numbered 300 members, and of these 116 were placemen, *i.e.* men who held office under the Crown. Upon these office-holders the operation of persuasion was first tried. Sir John Parnell, the ancestor of the late Charles Stewart Parnell, was the first victim. Writing to the Duke of Portland from Dublin Castle, under date January 16, 1799, Lord Cornwallis said : “On my finding, from a conversation which I had with Sir John Parnell soon after he landed, that he was determined not to support the

¹ *Cornwallis Correspondence*, vol. iii. pp. 100, 101.

Union, I have notified to him his dismissal from the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I shall pursue the same line of conduct without favour or partiality, whenever I may think it will tend to promote the success of the measure.”¹ This strong action on the part of the Viceroy was not only approved in London, its further application was urged by no less a person than Mr. Pitt himself. Writing to Lord Cornwallis on January 26, 1799, Mr. Pitt said: “In this view it seems very desirable (if Government is strong enough to do it without too much immediate hazard) to mark by dismissal the sense entertained of the conduct of those persons in office who opposed.”²

The dismissal of the Right Hon. James Fitzgerald, Prime Serjeant, who peremptorily declined to vote for the Union, followed that of Sir John Parnell. And as the battle proceeded, this form of screw was relentlessly applied.³ This was the first of the base methods applied to carry Pitt’s great scheme. As the Leinster Protest in the Lords stated, “old, steadfast friends of constitutional government” were dismissed from office “for their adherence to the Constitution.” The placemen having been practically secured by this stand-and-deliver policy, the game developed on new lines. The owners of the boroughs had next to be bribed and bought. Nobody winced at the idea. Writing to the Duke of Portland on January 26, 1799, Lord Cornwallis had pointed out “the impossibility of carrying a measure which is contrary

¹ *Cornwallis Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 38.

² *Ibid.* p. 57.

³ See Table of Dismissals, *ibid.* p. 108.

to the private interests of those who are to decide upon it, and which is not supported by the voice of the country at large." The English Cabinet at once rose to the fly so adroitly thrown by the Viceroy. "I have no difficulty," wrote the Duke of Portland to Lord Cornwallis (March 8, 1799), "in authorising Your Excellency to hold out the idea of compensation to all persons possessed of that species of property (nomination boroughs), and I do not scruple to advise that the compensation should be made on a liberal scale."

The shameless story need not be prolonged. Eighty-four boroughs were treated as private property, and the patrons of these boroughs received compensation amounting to £1,260,000. It is only necessary to add that the Duke of Portland's liberal scale of compensation was made all the easier for the English people by the fact that it was out of Irish taxation the funds for this bribery were provided. The placemen terrorised, the borough-mongers bought, the rest was easy. It only remained to purchase the Irish House of Lords. "Another mode of corruption," says Mr. Lecky (*Leaders of Public Opinion*, p. 179), "scarcely less efficacious than that of compensation to the borough-mongers, was employed to influence the wealthier Irish gentry. Peerages to this class are always a peculiar object of ambition, and they had long been given in Ireland with a lavishness which materially degraded the position. . . . But no sooner had the Union been carried than Lord Cornwallis sent to England the names of sixteen persons to whom he had expressly promised Irish peerages as rewards for

their support of the Union. But these promotions were but a small part of what was found necessary. Twenty-two Irish peers were created, five peers received English peerages, and twenty peers received higher titles."

It was by such means the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland was carried. It is under title-deeds won in such a way that England legislates for that country to-day. Mr. Fox in 1806 characterised the Union as "atrocious in its principle and abominable in its means." "It was," he said, "a measure the most disgraceful to the government of the country that was ever carried or proposed." Mr. Gladstone's verdict was not less pronounced. "I know," he said, "no blacker or fouler transaction in the history of man than the making of the Union between England and Ireland." And Mr. Lecky, whose position, alike as historian and politician, entitles his words to the greatest weight, says that, "whatever may be thought of the abstract merits of the arrangement, the Union, as it was carried, was a crime of the deepest turpitude—a crime which, by imposing with every circumstance of infamy a new form of government on a reluctant protesting nation, has vitiated the whole course of Irish opinion." Mr. Pitt's view, as expressed in the House of Commons, was, of course, quite different. He declared it to be a Union "by free consent, and on just and equal terms."

One question alone remains for treatment here—but it is vital to the whole issue. What was the position taken by Irish Catholics in all this sad wreck of a nation's honour, and what were they

led to expect? This is an interesting question, concerning which some elucidation is necessary. The ordinary idea current amongst Unionists to-day is that, whilst the Protestants opposed the Union because they foresaw the abolition of their ascendancy, the Catholics supported it because they saw in it the dawn of emancipation. There is little, if any, historic warrant for either assumption. It is quite true that there was a section of anti-Unionists who were violent anti-Catholics; it is also true that a section of the Catholic gentry were inclined to bargain and treat with the English party; but no one who has studied the history of the period can doubt, first, that the Protestant opposition to the Union was entirely independent of religious considerations, and second, that the mass of the Catholic people were altogether hostile to the English connection. As a matter of fact the Catholics had much more to hope for from the Irish Parliament than from any English assembly. Already (1793) the Irish Parliament had enfranchised Catholics. It had given them the right to sit on juries. Other galling disabilities had been removed. And the policy which Lord Fitzwilliam represented and embodied when he came to Ireland in 1795 had the entire approval and assent of the Protestant leaders. On the other hand, it was known that the king was utterly hostile to the Catholic claims. But the correspondence of Lord Cornwallis makes everything clear. In a letter to Mr. Pitt (Dec. 7, 1798) Lord Cornwallis undoubtedly appears to have believed that the Catholics might be trusted. He says: "You will, I think, be pleased

at the sensible line which the principal Catholics have adopted, and which makes one the less regret the narrow principles by which our plan of Union is circumscribed." English statesmen have, in dealing with Irish Catholic opinion, not infrequently been compelled to admit that they had misjudged it; and Lord Cornwallis had speedily to report a change. Writing to Major-General Ross (Dec. 12, 1798) His Excellency said: "The opposition to the Union increases daily in and about Dublin, and I am afraid, from conversations which I have held with persons much connected with them, that I was too sanguine when I hoped for the good inclinations of the Catholics. Their disposition is so completely alienated from the British Government that I believe they would be tempted to join with their bitterest enemies, the Protestants of Ireland, if they thought that measure would lead to a total separation of the two countries." Writing again, this time to the Duke of Portland, and under date Dec. 16, 1798, he said: "Our reports of the reception of the measure in the North are not favourable, especially about Belfast, and the principal Catholics about Dublin begin to hold much less sanguine language about the probable conduct of their brethren, and are disposed to think that in this part of the kingdom, at least, the greater number of them will join in the opposition to the Union."

All through the *Cornwallis Correspondence* the same language is held. There was, indeed, a Catholic party, then as now, more or less in favour of the English connection—this party was known as the Fingal party—but they represented

nothing and nobody, and they had to contend against the tremendous difficulty that, on account of their religion, they were aliens in their own land, and that the English Cabinet declined any immediate relief. The party was in the tightest of places, and that there should have been hesitation and doubt is not to be wondered at. Lord Fitzwilliam, a viceroy representing one of the strongest English governments, had come to Ireland a few years before and represented this government as being unanimously in favour of emancipation. Nothing really stood in the way but the deep-rooted prejudices of the king. The Irish Government actually introduced a bill to give effect to this policy—when the whole scene changed. English Ministers suddenly veered round. Lord Fitzwilliam was recalled, the Union was resolved on, and the Rebellion of 1798 broke out. The theory dangled before the Catholic magnates now was that, although emancipation could not be granted under an Irish Parliament, it could and would be granted by the Imperial Assembly. Hence it became a question of the Union and Emancipation or Independence and Disability. The wavering of Catholic bishops and gentry was therefore not unnatural. Mr. Lecky has summed it up thus: "The great object was to hold out hopes sufficient to secure Catholic support or neutrality without committing the Government to a distinct pledge, and the end was most dexterously accomplished." And Mr. Lecky goes on to say: "Lord Cornwallis was certainly innocent of all participation in this fraud; he was himself a dupe."

But whilst all this huxtering and bargaining was going on, whilst cautious promises and vague pledges were being made, the great fact emblazoned in Lord Cornwallis's letter of December 12, 1798 stands out. The Catholic people would join with their bitterest enemies if they thought it would lead to a separation of the two countries. These words were true then; they are, alas, as true to-day. Not a great triumph for English statesmanship to have achieved after one hundred years of Unionist government!

The Union having been carried by these means, the partnership having been formally and legally established, it becomes of interest to trace its results. What were its avowed objects so far as Ireland was concerned? These were set out in a letter from Lord Cornwallis to the Duke of Portland (Jan. 28, 1799). "The evils," he points out, "to be cured are religious divisions, the defective nature of the Imperial connection, and commercial inequalities." "Additional motives in favour of the measure have arisen," he said, "from an expectation that it would lead to a regeneration in respect of tithes—the most comprehensive cause of public discontent in Ireland—and an arrangement in favour of the Catholic and Dissenting Clergy." These, of course, were subsidiary objects so far as English policy was concerned. But how far have even these objects been realised? Have "religious divisions" disappeared? To ask the question is to answer it. The extreme section of Protestants are as hostile to what they call Romanism to-day as they were when Thomas Drummond stripped

Colonel Verner of the Commission of the Peace for presiding at a meeting in County Armagh to celebrate the battle of the Diamond. Is the Imperial connection any closer than it was during the existence of the independent Irish Parliament? The National Debt of Ireland in 1782 amounted to something between two and three million pounds sterling. In 1800, when the Union took place, it had gone up to twenty-eight million pounds, largely due to voluntary contributions from the Irish Parliament to the English war-chest and to the cost of suppressing the Great Rebellion. To-day more than three-fourths of the Irish representatives in the Imperial Parliament protest against Ireland being taxed to the extent of a single shilling for the South African war, and openly sympathise with the Dutch Republics! Commercial inequalities have undoubtedly been removed, and the policy of free trade and open ports prevails; but there are those—I am not of the number—who doubt the value of this to Ireland. Thirty-eight years after the Union the tithe question was effectively settled; but all efforts in the shape of concurrent endowment of the clergy were defeated. It cannot, therefore, be said that the hopes of Lord Cornwallis, as expressed in his letter to the Duke of Portland, have been at all realised.

But the larger question of the broad results of the Union on the country is one that demands consideration. It was one thing to oppose the Union and to denounce the methods by which it was carried; it was felt then, and it is felt now, to be another and an entirely different thing to advocate Repeal, and to

seek to plunge the country into rebellion and chaos. The stoutest of anti-Unionists shrank from such a course. I have quoted the opinion of Mr. Fox. Speaking in 1806 in support of the erection of a monument to Lord Cornwallis, he expressed his belief that "the Union, with all the circumstances attending it, was one of the most disgraceful acts in English history," but he disclaimed any wish or intention of repealing it, for, however objectionable the manner under which it was carried, it was "impossible to remedy any objections which might have existed against it by repeal."¹ Lord Grey, who was one of the foremost English opponents of the measure, was Prime Minister in 1833, and stated in that year that to repeal the Union "would be ruin to both countries."² Even Plunket, who had challenged the competence of the Irish Parliament to decree its own extinction, and who had declared that no man would be bound to obey the Act of Union as a law, "implored the Imperial Parliament to beware of any step that would paralyse the Union settlement and thereby shake the foundations of public security and the connection between the two countries."³ Foster, the unwavering defender of his country's independence, alone appears to have had a glimpse into the future. Speaking in 1805 he warned the House of Commons that "the introduction of the Catholics into Irish political life might be followed by a struggle for the Repeal of the Union, that the Parliament which a Catholic democracy would demand

¹ Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. viii. p. 548.

² *Ibid.* p. 548.

³ *Ibid.* p. 547.

would not be one in which loyalty or property would prevail, and that in the struggle the seeds of separation might be sown and Ireland might one day be torn from her connection with England.”¹ Even Grattan used language which went to show that he was not wholly convinced of the wisdom of a movement for unconditional repeal. And, after a century of experience, there are Unionists whose Unionism rests on no higher grounds, viz. the unwisdom of undoing such a measure.

This, then, being the position taken by the anti-Union leaders, the history of the twenty-nine years which intervened between the Union and Emancipation becomes of special interest. These years were tragic in the extreme. Too much need not be made of the Emmett Rebellion in 1803, because it was clearly a remnant of 1798. But *Hansard* of that period is full of pathos and tragedy. One, or at most two, volumes suffice for each session of Parliament. Glancing over the index of almost any volume the student comes upon “Irish Insurrection Act,” “Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act,” “Martial Law Continuation Act,” and “Commission to investigate the state of the poor.” These statutes and reports tell their own story. In the twenty-nine years to which I refer the Coercion Acts numbered twenty all told, and their enactment is the most eloquent testimony as to the state of the country. The truth is that Ireland, immediately after the Union, was smitten by two great calamities—the one easily avoidable, the other wholly unavoidable. English Ministers, having been intimidated by the

¹ Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. viii. p. 547.

king, played the fool over the Catholic question. Pitt's conduct upon this, the great issue of the time, was as perverse as it was indefensible. He and the Government were absolutely convinced of the justice of the Catholic claims. They knew well that serious opposition was not to be feared ; they were quite aware that they had secured the neutrality, if not the support, of many Irish Catholics for the Union by promises, vague and indefinite it may be, but by promises ; and yet they allowed the bigotry of the monarch to prevail. Ireland accordingly was plunged into the first of those great menacing movements which, under the name of constitutional agitation, have swept so much before them in that country. The hour had come, and with it the man. O'Connell sprang into existence as a great political force. Catholic Ireland rose as one man. A great and just cause, a magnificent personality, oratory that swayed and moved great masses of men as they have never been swayed and moved before or since, swept all opposition like chaff before the wind. The country was convulsed and disturbed for years. In 1828 the movement culminated in the celebrated Clare Election. By a strange irony of fate the Government candidate was Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald, a son of the Prime Serjeant who, along with Sir John Parnell, was dismissed from office because he peremptorily declined to vote for the Union. The candidate of the people was O'Connell. Triumphantly returned, the great tribune presented himself at the Table of the House. He refused to take the oath because of its terms. A struggle ensued. But common sense ultimately asserted itself. The king

was assured that the issue was simple and plain—emancipation or civil war in Ireland. And Wellington, who had a stiffer back and a stronger will than Pitt, prevailed. Thus ended the struggle for Catholic Emancipation. By all the laws of honour, by all the canons of statesmanship, the concession ought to have accompanied, or followed, the Act of Union. It was delayed for well-nigh thirty years. It was conceded, not graciously or because it was right and wise, but gracelessly, and after the country had been convulsed by a great and threatening agitation which foreboded disaster, not alone to Irish interests, but to the interests of England in Ireland. No people ever had a cause more just. No people were ever so unjustly treated. England commenced then that fatal policy which has run all through her dealings with Ireland, and which this volume is intended to illustrate—the policy of refusing justice until backed by force, illegality, and compulsion. It is a lamentable story; but the thread runs through every chapter of the history of Ireland since the Union.

Meanwhile great and silent forces were at work, bringing appalling disaster in their train. No one, whatever abstract opinions on the policy of the Union he may hold, can fail to admit that the years following its enactment were years of misfortune and calamity for Ireland. In my opinion the greatest of these misfortunes must have come had the Union been defeated, had Ireland been self-governed and independent; but the misfortunes themselves were unquestioned and unquestionable. That the Irish Metropolis, which had prospered and gone forward by leaps and bounds under the

Irish Parliament, should suffer by its abolition was only to be expected. To those who know Dublin as I do, who look every day upon the monuments of its olden grandeur and glory, who watch even now the pathetic struggle going on against decay, it is not difficult to understand the feelings of the Irish people. The noble building standing in the very centre of the city, where, in 1782, the independence of Ireland was asserted, in the halls of which Grattan and Plunket, Foster and Ponsonby thundered against the Union, is now turned into a den of money-changers. The splendid town mansions of the aristocracy and gentry of the country, with their fine old mahogany doors and wainscoting, their carved ceilings, their priceless inlaid mantel-pieces—the work of a resident Italian colony—are no longer required, and have been put to a baser use. The great rooms are, like banquet halls, deserted. Irish family life, the prattle of children, the spending of huge sums of money in the capital—all this is over and gone. The splendid mansion of the Duke of Leinster is now occupied by the Royal Dublin Society ; Lord Powerscourt's town house in William Street is in the hands of a great drapery firm ; the mansion of Lord Charlemont in Rutland Square is the Census office—and so on all through the long list. These great houses all through the city, once the homes of the Irish gentry, and from which radiated all the forces of civilisation, have been turned into hotels, convents, hospitals, warehouses, and offices. Nobody could doubt what the effect of such a change would be ; it told upon the entire country. Dublin is a very noble and beautiful city ;

its public buildings, its splendid parks, its wide and handsome streets, its great squares, its lovely suburbs and environment, have long been the admiration of travellers. But there are two cities—the city which the traveller sees, and the city which lies out of sight. In the days of the Irish Parliament this city lying out of sight was full of life, activity, and patriotism. The manufacture of poplin, and the weaving of other fabrics, constituted a great industry, and every house had its work. All this has been changed. The liberties of Dublin are now sad beyond description. No slums in any other city of which I have knowledge approach them in desolation. With the exception of the manufacture of porter and whisky, all other industries have practically disappeared. The poor are herded and huddled together like swine. Sanitation is all but unknown—is indeed impossible. Disease is rampant; the death-rate is abnormal; and but for the influence of the Roman Catholic religion, but for the devotion of the priests and the Sisters of Charity belonging to that Church, there would be imminent danger of crowds of this hopeless class of humanity reverting to savagery. This is the city lying out of sight, which few people visit. A century ago it was full of life, of business activity, of patriotism; to-day it is a veritable Gehenna. Yes, the Irish Metropolis paid a heavy price for the Union. This much must go unquestioned.

But as the years rolled on, with the Union Jack floating over the Irish Ensign, silent forces were at work, as I have pointed out, which speedily brought disaster. It was not alone that turbulence and dis-

order prevailed ; the struggle for emancipation, the war constantly going on against the payment of tithe, and the land trouble would have accounted for much of this. The real trouble lay deeper. All during the prolonged war period prices had been grossly inflated. This was specially true of agricultural produce. The population, which at the time of the Union was estimated at from 4 to 4½ millions, rapidly increased. The creation of the forty-shilling freeholder induced the landlords to sanction, and in many cases to encourage, the subdivision of land. Families accordingly multiplied and increased. The potato was the one article of food ; it was cheap and plentiful ; but in spite of this, in spite of high prices and this great and cheap article of food, appalling misery stalked abroad. Destitution everywhere prevailed ; there was no poor law ; suffering was acute ; commissions were appointed, sat, and reported, but nothing effective was done. And then the crash came. That "loud Belgian Sabbath," which saw Wellington and Napoleon locked in their last great struggle, settled much. Peace was proclaimed. Then followed the second and perfectly unavoidable calamity of which I have spoken. Prices fell with a great crash. Ruin followed the change elsewhere than in Ireland ; but in Ireland it was simply appalling. Reporting long after the event, the Devon Commission, referring to the removal of large numbers of sub-tenants, and quoting Dr. Doyle, the famous Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, said :—

If the condition of the landlord and of those tenants who remain in possession are alone considered, the change

is undoubtedly one of unmixed good. But the situation of another class remains to be considered, that of the ejected tenantry, or of those who are obliged to give up their small holdings in order to promote the consolidation of farms. Their condition is necessarily most deplorable. It would be impossible for language to convey an idea of the state of distress to which the ejected tenantry have been reduced, or of the disease, misery, and even vice which they have propagated in the towns wherever they have settled. So that not only they who have been ejected have been rendered miserable, but they have carried with them and propagated that misery. They have increased the stock of labour; they have rendered the habitations of those who received them more crowded; they have given occasion to the dissemination of disease; they have been obliged to resort to theft and all manner of vice and iniquity to procure subsistence; but what perhaps is the most painful of all, a vast number of them have perished of want.¹

No more need be said here—there are Irish histories which fill in the ghastly details of the period. Those who care to have their feelings harrowed and their indignation roused can study the records. In the main the story is perhaps best and most concisely told in the Reports of the Parliamentary and Royal Commissions of the period.² In closing this chapter it is only necessary to summarise what has gone before. We have—

(a) The Union carried and the Irish Parliament abolished.

(b) Emancipation delayed for thirty years owing to the scruples of the king, and in spite of the fact that all parties

¹ *Report of Devon Commission*, p. 19.

² Commons Committee, 1823; Emigration Committee, 1826-27; Commons Committee, 1830.

were practically agreed as to the justice of the Catholic claims.

(c) The enactment of the Union followed by the collapse of Irish prosperity, and by a period of turbulence and disorder, culminating in something like general bankruptcy due to the fall in prices on the conclusion of peace after the Great War.

I have pointed out that, Union or no Union, the last and the greatest of these calamities was bound to come. But it left an enduring mark on the country. The seeds of the great famine were now sown—indeed, that great catastrophe was already on the way ; its muffled footsteps were fairly audible.

CHAPTER II

FROM EMANCIPATION TO THE FAMINE, 1829-1847

ALTHOUGH the country as it emerged from the struggle for emancipation was plunged in unutterable misery—misery of which nobody living to-day has, or can have, the slightest idea—it cannot be denied or even questioned that with the new and more bracing atmosphere of civil equality Ireland entered upon a period when English statesmen began to realise their responsibilities in and for that country. We have reached in our narrative the time when Foster's sinister prophecy was about to be fulfilled, when the concession of Catholic rights was to be followed by a great demand for Repeal of the Union. We have reached the time hinted at by the Devon Commission when a nation of paupers had increased and grown until it passed the limit of possible subsistence—a time of great and terrible trial, out of which, however, in the mysterious providence of God, came a New Birth and a New Life. But before these great events are reached and dealt with, it has to be recorded, as I have said, that English statesmen began to realise at once the state of Ireland and their own responsibilities and duties in regard to it.

The question of Irish Education will be treated separately, and as a whole, in another chapter. Let it suffice here to say that the facilities of the time, so far as primary education was concerned, were limited to two—the education of the hedge school, or of the proselytising societies; the latter of which appeared to imagine that the “joy of the angels in heaven over one sinner that repenteth” had special reference to every Papist child that was cajoled or coaxed into becoming a nominal Protestant in Ireland. Ministers faced this great problem of education with courage and with vigour; and Lord Stanley, in 1833, founded and established that great system of National Education which for well-nigh seventy years has proved such a blessing to Ireland. Later, the same period saw the foundation of the Queen’s Colleges and the Queen’s University, as well as the enlargement of the grant to Maynooth—the whole constituting, so far as mere output is concerned, a very admirable educational record. But more on this point anon.

In 1838 two other measures were passed which left a deep and an abiding mark upon the country—the Poor Law was established, and the Tithe Commutation Act became law. The necessity for the Poor Law was simply overwhelming. In examining the question of Irish poverty at this period it will be expedient to deal, first of all, with the problem of population. Previous to 1841 there can be no exact data, and all estimates must, of course, partake, more or less, of guess-work. In 1712 the estimated population of Ireland was 2,100,000; in 1767 it had risen by slow but orderly progression to 2,500,000;

and in 1778 Arthur Young put the population at something over 3,000,000. From this period on, and owing to causes already described, the advance went forward by leaps and bounds. At the time of the Union the figures stood at over 4,000,000. There was nothing like the increase which now took place anywhere else in Europe. In France, for example, the population in 1791 was 26,000,000. In 1851 it was 36,000,000, an increase of 36 per cent. In 1780 the population of England was 8,000,000. In 1841 it had just doubled. But in Ireland the population which, according to Arthur Young, stood at 3,000,000 in 1778, rose to over 8,000,000 in 1841, and in 1846 it stood at close upon 9,000,000. Here, undoubtedly, lay the great fundamental fact of this period. It explains everything. It was the root of much of the mischief and suffering which prevailed. And, be it remembered, this enormous increase was not due to the commercial development of the country, to new industries necessitating the employment of many people. Nothing of the kind. It was due to the extraordinary development in one article of cheap food, to the undue subdivision of the land, and, considering all the circumstances, to the not unnatural improvidence of the mass of the people. Having ascertained the actual facts, let us now try and get a glimpse of the Ireland of that day. The newspaper press had then practically no existence. Railways and telegraphs were just beginning to be talked about. Mr. Thomas Drummond, that famous Scotchman who diagnosed the Irish malady as no other man of his day did, had not reached Ireland.

And in 1835 the Government appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the condition of the poor, placing at its head a man of rare insight and ability—Archbishop Whately. Dr. Murray, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, and Dr. Carlisle, a famous Presbyterian divine, were also members of the Commission. Three reports and twelve bulky volumes of evidence stand as a memorial of the labours of Dr. Whately and his colleagues. They constitute, in my opinion, the most ghastly reading of the century. “We cannot,” they say, “estimate the number of persons in Ireland out of work, and in distress, during thirty weeks of the year, at less than 585,000, nor the number of persons dependent upon them at less than 1,800,000, making, in the whole, 2,385,000. A great portion of these are insufficiently provided at any time with the commonest necessities of life. Their habitations are wretched hovels; several of a family sleep together upon straw, or upon the bare sod, sometimes with a blanket, sometimes even without so much to cover them; their food commonly consists of dry potatoes, and with these they are sometimes so scantily supplied as to be obliged to stint themselves to one bare meal in the day. There are even instances of persons being driven by hunger to seek sustenance in wild herbs.” And they add that “the earnings of the labourer come on an average of the whole class to from 2s. to 2s. 6d. a week for the year.”

But we are not wholly dependent for the facts upon what may be called official information. Three highly competent travellers visited Ireland

during this period, one a Scotchman, another a Frenchman, and the third a German. Mr. Henry Inglis went through Ireland in 1834. He travelled from Wexford to Donegal, from Coleraine to Valentia. Here is his story.

The great mass of the population have no constant employment. The diet of those who are employed consists of a scanty meal or two of potatoes, with the addition at times of a little butter-milk. The diet of the far greater number who are not in employment consists of as many dry potatoes as serve just to sustain life. As for clothing, an English beggar would not lift off the ground the clothes worn by old and young of the lower classes of Leinster, Munster, and Connaught. The young can scarcely be said to be clothed at all. If the word starvation be meant to comprehend those cases in which insufficient subsistence induces disease, predisposes the individual to the attack of epidemics, or accelerates the decay of nature, then I have good reason to believe that by far the greater number of the Irish poor die of starvation.

Writing three years later, in 1837, Gustave de Beaumont said :—

Misery, naked and famishing, covers the entire country. It shows itself everywhere and at every hour of the day. It is the first thing you see when you land on the Irish coast, and from that moment it never ceases to be present to your view, sometimes under the aspect of the diseased displaying his sores, sometimes under that of the pauper scarcely covered by his rags ; it besieges you incessantly ; you hear its groans and cries in the distance, and if the voice does not wring your heart with unspeakable pity, it importunes and appals you. . . . I have seen the Indian in his forests and the negro in his chains, and thought, as I contemplated their miserable condition, that I beheld the very ultimatum of human

wretchedness. But I did not then know the condition of unhappy Ireland. The misery of Ireland descends to a degree unknown elsewhere. The miserably destitute in France, whose lot we so justly deplore, would be deemed a privileged class in Ireland.

And in 1842, seven years after Mr. Inglis had given his experiences, Johann G. Kohl bore similar testimony.

Heaven pardon my ignorance, I knew not that I should ever see a people upon whom Almighty God had imposed heavier privations. Now that I have seen Ireland it seems to me that the poorest among the Finlanders lead a life of comparative comfort, and that the poor Irishman would feel like a king if he had their homes, their clothing, and their daily fare. Indeed, the question may be raised whether in the entire world a nation is to be found that is subjected to such physical privation as the peasantry in some parts of Ireland. A Russian peasant, no doubt, is the slave of a harder master, but still he is fed and housed to his content, and need not resort to mendicancy for his living. Servia and Bothnia are reckoned the most wretched countries of Europe; but if badly housed the people are at least well clad. The Crimean Tartars we consider poor and barbarian; but, good heavens, they, at all events, look like human beings! We Germans have beggars and paupers amongst us, but they constitute the exception, whereas in Ireland beggary or abject poverty is the prevailing rule. The nation is a nation of beggars, and those who are above beggary would seem to be the exception. . . . Nowhere else do we find human beings gnawing from year to year at the same vegetable, berry, or root. There are animals, indeed, which do so, but human beings nowhere save in Ireland.

It was out of all this misery and human wretchedness, and none too soon, that the Irish Poor Law came

into existence. The Government and the Parliament of that day had their hands full. The rebellion in Canada, and the re-making of the Constitution of that province, occupied the public mind and greatly disturbed the statesmen of the time. But the Bill for establishing the present Irish Poor Law system was read a second time, on February 5, 1838, and it passed into law during the same session. The "house," as the Irish workhouse has come to be known to the Irish people, is not, even now, a popular institution; and when everything is said for its management that can be said, it is still true that it leaves much to be desired. But the great foundation principle of the Poor Law, alike in England and in Ireland—viz. that the destitute shall not perish—is a sound and Christian principle. And although the law did not provide, as many desired, for the employment of the poor; although the system is shunned to a large extent by the poor, and even by the destitute to-day; although it is condemned by many who fail altogether to appreciate its work,—one has only to think of the state of things out of which it emerged, and the priceless service rendered by the Poor Law authorities in the time of the great famine, to be thankful for its institution.

Even before the Union, as Lord Cornwallis has pointed out,¹ the mode of collecting tithe gave rise to more discontent, and was the cause of more disorder, than any other agency in Ireland. The Protestant Episcopal Church was the church of a rich and comparatively well-to-do minority; but it was established by law and largely endowed out of

¹ Cornwallis to Duke of Portland, January 28, 1799.

the poverty of the very poor. The Act of Union had confirmed all its privileges—had made it, in fact, part and parcel of the sister establishment of England—and had decreed that it was so to remain for ever. In our own day we have seen something like a tithe war, on a limited scale, in Wales, a country where the church of a minority is maintained largely at the expense of the majority who do not worship at its altars. But Wales is, almost wholly and sternly, Protestant; Ireland was, and is, devoutly Roman Catholic. And from the Union on to 1838 there was to be seen, over a great part of the country, the extraordinary spectacle of Protestant ministers collecting their incomes in the shape of tithe from Roman Catholic farmers literally at the point of the bayonet. It was a loathsome business. Riots were of frequent occurrence; secret societies were born of it; lives were sacrificed; and a great part of the country lived during a certain portion of the year in a state of siege. It is curious to look back upon these times and observe the action of the statesmen in power. Law and order had, of course, to be maintained. The rights of the Church had to be secured, and, to use a modern phrase, there could be no trafficking with traitors. Looking back, the politician of to-day wonders how Parliament could have so long tolerated this palpable injustice. But of what was Parliament then composed? It was, to an overwhelming extent, a class institution. The Irish representation was largely a representation of the Irish land system, and it required no little courage for an Irish Protestant to stand out and be counted on the side of the people in those days. Sir William Somerville, the

representative of Drogheda at that time, had this rare and uncommon attribute. Speaking in the great debate upon the commutation proposals, the honourable gentleman said :—

Honourable gentlemen opposite seemed to forget that they had to conciliate the feelings of six millions of people with reference to a church which belonged to only six hundred thousand. What was the common state of things in Ireland? They saw, on the one hand, the Protestant churches spread throughout the country, many of them fine edifices, and the ministers, if not supported in luxury, at any rate well paid by the imposition of this tax upon the people ; and, on the other, they saw a building, little better in appearance than a common cottage, with mud walls and a thatched roof, with hundreds of people on the Sundays round its doors, crowding to get admission. The former was the church for the few, and supported by the tithes, and the latter was the church of the bulk of the population supported with its ministers by their voluntary contributions. The poorest people, independent of having to contribute to the support of their own church, had to give a portion of their scanty maintenance towards paying for this richly-endowed church, the form of worship in which was alien to their feelings.¹

And with something of that despair which frequently fills the minds of Unionist Irishmen even to-day, when England turns a deaf ear to the fairest demands, Sir William went on to say :—

When the honourable and learned member for Dublin agitated the question of the Repeal of the Union, he opposed it because he felt that the interests of Ireland would be best consulted by maintaining a strict, firm, and bona-fide union with England ; but he regarded the Union as it stood at present as a mere farce, the

¹ *Hansard*, 1838, vol. xlii. p. 1230.

advantages being all on one side, and Ireland being more in the relation of a step-child than sister to England. If (he said) his honourable friend should again agitate that question, he would not say that he should depart from his original opinion, but he firmly believed, and he said it with regret, that the feeling of discontent which existed in Ireland towards the British Legislature would increase to such an extent as to be removable only by a domestic Parliament.

It is not necessary here to enter into the details of the Government scheme under which the odious system which had alike disgraced the Church and the country, and which had cost so much, came to an end. The tithe was, in effect, converted into a rent-charge. It ceased to be collected directly from the people, and was paid by the landlords. And thus, after more than half a century of active conflict and bloodshed, peace was reached, and the Irish people received their second lesson in the science of agitation. Once more the lesson was broadly and clearly taught that to secure the most elementary justice England had to be threatened, bullied, and frightened. Bloodshed and tumult were clearly marked out as the instruments by which to ensure success.

We now get to close quarters with the two great events of this period—the Repeal agitation and the Famine. Both of these events left an enduring mark upon the country. In the one case we see practically a whole people rising in response to O'Connell's call; in the other we see that same people prostrate and helpless before the sudden and appalling stroke of the Angel of Death. I cannot say that the agitation for Repeal was unnatural or

that it ought not to have been expected. What had the Union up to this period done for Ireland? This is not an abstract question; the argument is not of an academic character; it is simply a question of fact. We have seen what Sir William Somerville—one of the Liberal Unionists of that period—thought of it. He said that it was a one-sided Union, from which Ireland derived little or no advantage. And Sharman Crawford asserted then that it was a Union maintainable by force alone. What, I ask again, were the facts? The state of the country was simply appalling. To those who remembered the comparatively halcyon days of Irish independence, the condition of affairs must have been utterly exasperating. The country was, to a large extent, a rabbit-warren of paupers and beggars. The laws regulating the tenure of land—land being the sole source of livelihood for the great mass of the people—were perhaps the most iniquitous and unjust that ever disgraced any statute book in a civilised country. Trade and commerce were paralysed. Law had ceased to be a terror to evil-doers, because no punishment that it was capable of awarding could be worse than the fate of the dumb millions condemned to what was little better than a living death. And what must never be forgotten is the fact that Parliament was then in the hands of the Irish enemy. To-day the representatives of Ireland control, to a large extent, the parliamentary situation; no Minister can in these times flout Ireland with impunity. It was entirely different then; for, although O'Connell thundered, neither he nor his friends had discovered

the methods by which in after years Ireland was able to compel attention, if not to dominate the situation, at Westminster. It was no wonder, then, that in 1840, with all this misery, and with no other outlook, the people struck and pronounced for Repeal of the Union.

It was on April 18, 1840, that O'Connell founded the first Repeal Association in Dublin. The capital of the Association at its inauguration amounted to the modest sum of £44. The story of this Association—how it grew and flourished—how the “Repeal rent” flowed in by tens of thousands of pounds—how, spreading over three provinces, the movement seized upon the imagination of an entire people—all this is part of the ordinary history of Ireland and has not to be recounted here. In 1842 there were bread riots in Ennis; the police fired and two men were killed. In Cork the mob attacked the potato market. All over the country crime, of the kind usually to be found under such circumstances, prevailed. A special Commission sat in Tipperary to deal with agrarian outrages. How familiar it all reads to-day! Mr. Hall, a landlord, shot in open day. He had evicted a tenant, the result being the murder of Hall and the execution of Kent the murderer. Timothy Quilty convicted of the murder of Michael Laffan—the cause of it all a land dispute. Laffan was shot on the open road in sight of several persons. The inquest had to be held in the street, and the body was left on a dunghill—no inhabitant being willing or courageous enough to give the corpse house-room. The present generation turned pale at the atrocities of the Land League period,

but history simply repeats itself in Ireland as elsewhere. And what I feel compelled to say here is that the real culprit in much of the agrarian crime that has disgraced Ireland since the Union was not so much the Irish peasant who, facing hunger and ruin, dared all with the blunderbuss in his hand, but the English Government and the Imperial Parliament which refused the commonest justice on the land question, and rejected every proposal in the direction of reform. And, of course, with crime rampant, and hunger gnawing at the very vitals of the people, the usual remedies were applied. Speaking in the House of Commons in reply to Lord Jocelyn — an Irish landlord representative — Sir Robert Peel stated (and a similar statement was made by the Duke of Wellington in the House of Lords) that “there was no influence, power, or authority which the prerogatives of the Crown and existing laws gave to Ministers that would not be exercised for the purpose of maintaining the Union.” And he added these remarkable words, that, “deprecating as I do all war, but, above all, civil war, yet there is no alternative which I do not think preferable to the dismemberment of this Empire.” The Purchase of Arms Bill was one of the measures which followed this declaration. It was strongly opposed; and it is of interest to note that its rejection was moved by Mr. Sharman Crawford. The concluding words of the honourable gentleman, who represented Rochdale at the time, but whose name and memory are still a precious Ulster inheritance, are worthy of record. “The true mode of governing Ireland,” he said, “was to reduce her to submission

by kindness and impartiality, by passing good laws, and by assimilating her situation to that of England. According to the present method of legislation the connection between England and Ireland might, indeed, be maintained; but it would only be maintained by force, by binding Ireland and England by hoops of steel, while she would eat into the vitals of her more powerful neighbour, and require an enormous outlay of the revenues of the State. Ireland would continue in a state of discontent which nothing could repress but military domination." Nothing, however, could stay the demand for repressive measures. The country was panic-stricken. Men like Cobden and Macaulay voted against the Arms Bill; the enlightened conscience of the day was evidently uneasy; but the public safety argument carried all before it. Meanwhile O'Connell was proceeding full steam ahead in Ireland. There he was virtually uncrowned king. The people flocked to hear him in countless thousands. Wherever he spoke the scene was the same. No great agitation was ever more orderly; and this was enormously helped and aided by that wonderful temperance movement which sprang up then under the auspices of Father Mathew. This humble Capuchin friar, born in Tipperary, and located in Cork, found himself, before he well knew it, at the head of perhaps the greatest moral reform which any country ever witnessed. Inspired by a holy enthusiasm, Father Mathew traversed the country from end to end. The people took the pledge by tens of thousands. The effect was speedily discernible. Crime of the ordinary type disappeared; the misery

that was not due to political causes was sensibly alleviated ; a higher standard of comfort began to assert itself. Distilleries were closed ; public-houses disappeared ; and for seven or eight years this wonderful man moved about, virtue proceeding from him, as it were, wherever he went. The enthusiasm to a large extent died with the good priest himself, but whilst it lasted it was an enormous factor in the Repeal agitation. O'Connell had a sober people to deal with ; and the value of such a thing has been well known to the long line of Irish agitators since that time. The great meeting at Tara is part of Irish history ; but it was at Clontarf, a suburb of Dublin, the real blow fell. The position when this great meeting was convened was critical in the extreme. O'Connell was certain that the winning post was in sight, and that Ireland was within measurable distance of being a nation once again. But the bolt was shot. The meeting was proclaimed and prohibited. The display of force left no doubt that business was intended, and that any attempt to persevere with the meeting would be met by preventive measures. O'Connell gave way. The Repeal agitation never recovered that day. I shall have to recur to this question again, and to show how the great liberator was finally worsted—not so much indeed by the English Government as by Irish dissension.

But meanwhile the Pale Horse and his Rider were on the road. In 1845 the potato disease showed itself. It was first observed, not in Ireland, but in England, and a Mr. Parker wrote to Sir James Graham on August 11 pointing out

its appearance in the region around Dover. Towards the end of October the Government Commissioners were hard at work, and Sir Lyon Playfair wrote to Sir Robert Peel that he was "sorry to give so desponding a letter, but we cannot," he says, "conceal from ourselves that the case is much worse than the public suppose." On the 31st the Duke of Leinster presided over a great meeting in Dublin, at which it was declared that "famine and pestilence" were "immediately imminent," and calling upon the Government to "order the ports of Ireland to be opened for the importation of food-stuffs." A Mansion House Relief Committee was formed in Dublin, and began its operations by impeaching the Government for refusing to open the ports, or to call Parliament together earlier than usual. But whilst Commissions were examining and reporting, whilst relief funds were being dealt out, things were indeed becoming serious. In April 1846 famine riots broke out in many towns. Writing from Clonmel a correspondent, speaking of this period, says: "You can have no idea of the state this town is in. We have cannon at either end of the town, and the streets are full of police and soldiers. This morning the mob broke into every baker's shop and took all the food they could lay their hands upon. The banks and shops are all shut, and the town is in a state of siege." A report from Carrick-on-Suir is on the same lines. "This town," the writer says, "is in a horrible state. The populace rose and broke into all the meal and provision stores and afterwards into the shops generally. The town looks as if it had been sacked

by an enemy." A boat proceeding from Limerick to Clare was attacked by a body of starving peasants and plundered of her cargo of corn and Indian meal. From Skibbereen, which afterwards became a very charnel-house, came the news that "hunger, nakedness, sickness, and mortality, almost equal to the ravages of an epidemic" were "the prevailing features" of the situation. "Fever afflicts hundreds, and dysentery produced by cold and want of nutritious food is equally common. The workhouse contains 900 paupers; the fever hospital, built for 40, contains 161. The number of deaths in the infirmary in November was 87." The Queen's Speech (1847) bore eloquent testimony to the facts. "In Ireland especially," Her Majesty said, "the loss of the usual food of the people has been the cause of severe suffering, of disease, and greatly increased mortality among the poorer classes. Outrages have become more frequent, chiefly directed against property, and the transit of provisions has been rendered unsafe in some parts of the country."

This is bald and official, yet exceedingly suggestive language. The real truth is that no pen could picture, no language could describe, the horrible state of Ireland in what has been well called "the Black Forty-Seven." When Parliament opened Lord John Russell stated that 470,000 men were then employed on relief works—the weekly wages bill amounting to £158,000. This was under the Labour Rate Act, which gave place to another measure authorising work on the holdings of the people—food being supplied through local relief committees. The provisions of the Poor

Law were relaxed. Fifty thousand pounds were granted to buy seed for tenants. The expenditure of a million pounds was authorised on waste lands. The public charity of the world was invoked. The Queen gave £2000. Funds poured in, and with money came hosts of willing workers. But when everything was done it was all totally inadequate. Greater catastrophes have no doubt occurred in India — there our fellow-subjects, similarly afflicted, have perished by tens of thousands; but India is far distant, and the cry of the famine-stricken does not easily penetrate; the sight of the dying does not appal there as it does at our own doors. In Ireland the catastrophe was simply hideous. A failure in the potato crop was nothing new. In 1800, 1807, 1809, 1811, 1816, and again in 1832, there had been partial failures, followed by considerable suffering; but in 1846-47 the whole crop disappeared in a week. Human beings were not the only sufferers. Pigs and poultry, the main dependence of the small farmer and labourer, all but disappeared from the land. The people literally lay down and died in thousands. The ghastly story has been the theme of many pens; it is no part of my purpose in writing this volume to dwell upon it. But perhaps the most eloquent testimony, at once to the extent of the calamity, and the character of the people, is to be found in the Report of the Census Commissioners for 1851. After recording the shocking mortality of this period, the Commissioners go on to say: "But no pen has recorded the numbers of the forlorn and starving who perished by the wayside

or in the ditches, or of the mournful groups, sometimes of whole families, who lay down and died, one after another, upon the floor of their cabin, and so remained uncoffined and unburied until chance unveiled the appalling scene. No such amount of suffering and misery has been chronicled in Irish history since the days of Edward Bruce ; and yet, through all, the forbearance of the Irish peasantry, and the calm submission with which they bore the deadliest ills that can fall on man, can scarcely be paralleled in the annals of any people."

I feel that no more need be said to emphasise the terrible realities of this dreadful time. In cases of death by starvation frequent verdicts of "wilful murder" were returned against Lord John Russell and the English Government. Who can blame a people so sorely stricken for striking wildly and blindly at their governors? It was, of course, sheer madness—the counsel of despair and desperation. The calamity might, no doubt, and to a certain extent, have been foreseen ; the abnormal increase of the population, the precarious character of the potato, the recklessness which distinguished its cultivation, and the entire dependence of the people upon it, must have been impressed upon the Government of the day ; but when all this is said and admitted, it is hard to see how any government, Irish or English, could have staved off the catastrophe. It, in fact, represented God's method of righting great wrongs—of punishing improvidence upon the part of the people, and the scandalous neglect of governments. And, as I have said, out of the travail of a whole people came a New Birth and a

New Life. The population when the catastrophe burst upon the country was close upon 9,000,000. To-day it is barely half that figure. And it was with the country lying all but prostrate the Great Exodus, which has surged on ever since, began. Irishmen turned their eyes to the west as the Jew opens his window toward Jerusalem when he prays. The Great Republic opened its arms wide to those who had suffered so severely. It is to be feared that in the mad stampede which took place many of those who sailed in coffin ships never reached their destination—indeed this is absolutely certain. But 152,060 emigrants left Ireland in 1851. And the tide has surged westward ever since that date—the appalling total of 3,841,419 persons having fled from the land of their birth between the years 1851 and 1900. This exodus has affected every part of the country alike. Leinster has given 683,209, Munster 1,346,889, Ulster 1,084,214, Connaught 616,439, whilst 110,668 have gone whose birthplaces have not been specified. No country in Europe presents such a spectacle. And the singular and inexplicable thing is that the rush still continues. Even the most heartless, even those who have steadily maintained, and with a certain amount of truth, that the depletion was necessary, are now constrained to admit that things are becoming serious. Men cannot be had to do a labourer's work; girls cannot be had for domestic service. We have reached the residuum in both classes; and although those who have gone have left more to be shared by those who remain behind, no one questions that, unless a change comes, Ireland

must soon be a nation of old men and women. The young and strong and vigorous are leaving her shores as if they were plague-stricken. Writing in 1890 upon this subject, I ventured to say that the great tribulation through which Ireland then passed had "quickened a new and a better life. If the potato had not failed in 1845-47, if the emigration had not taken place, and if the population had gone on increasing as it did up to that year, there would now be 15,000,000 people in Ireland! Surely no Irish Nationalist can contemplate these figures with equanimity. The famine was, no doubt, one of the greatest and most terrible visitations to which any country was ever subject; but it forced the people to look elsewhere. Life was not possible for them in Ireland. Gradually they realised this. A great uprising took place. In large numbers they exchanged starvation for plenty; they have helped to build up more than one new State; and thus benefiting themselves they have blessed and benefited those they left behind. Before the famine period the average annual income in Ireland per household was under £50. It is now considerably over £80. This is almost entirely due to emigration. In short, they added, by leaving, £20 to the annual income of each family belonging to the farming class in Ireland. By going they lessened the fierce competition for land, a competition which raised its price, and was the main factor in the troubles which brought about the Land Acts. Their removal steadied the labour market. As the years rolled on men no longer stood idle in the market-place. The wages of the labourer went

up from an average of 4d. to what it is now, an average of 2s. per day. In short, the people got elbow room and were able to breathe freely."

I do not think, writing ten years after these words were penned, that I would care to unwrite or greatly modify the opinions here expressed. But there is another side to all this for England. Mr. Froude has told us that in the American War of Independence the most stalwart and irreconcilable of England's enemies were the Scoto-Irish, who even then had left the stubborn soil of Ulster under a deep sense of wrong. And even the most blatant Imperialist must admit that the descendants of the Irish exiles who went forth in the fifties and after have cost England dearly. They went, as the *Times* said, with a vengeance. The political economist, the Government statistician, the politician who sees through a glass darkly, were certain that all was right. But these exiles became American citizens. They nursed the Fenian rebellion which threw England into a panic; they financed the Land League which paralysed English law in Ireland, and changed the very basis of that feudal land system which so long cursed the country; they hatched dynamite conspiracies and paid England back, at least in part, for the sufferings of their fathers and their friends. But they have done far more: they have prevented in the past, and they prevent to-day, any understanding between England and the United States—such an understanding as Mr. Chamberlain thinks would dominate and control the world. Yes, beyond all doubt, England has paid dearly for the luxury of Irish landlordism—for this is what it all means—

and she will continue to pay until she rids herself of the incubus.

It only remains in dealing with this period to mention two things. Coercion Acts became necessary, and they were passed. The special form of crime which want and bad seasons always breeds in Ireland became painfully common. In introducing the Coercion Bill of 1846, Lord St. Germain's stated that "in 1844-45 there had been 242 cases of firing at the person, 1048 cases of aggravated assault, 710 robberies of arms, 79 cases of bands of men appearing in arms, 282 cases of administering unlawful oaths, 2306 cases of threatening letters, 737 cases of attacking houses, and 205 cases of firing into houses." This is, in all truth, a heavy indictment—justifying, one would say, the strongest action on the part of the Government. And what must have been the condition of Ireland as a whole at this period? A nation of beggars starving—the more desperate resorting to crime in the vain hope of finding a remedy for the hunger which prevailed! But even then the House of Commons had its spasms of doubt, and it was on a Coercion Bill the Government of Sir Robert Peel fell.

Whilst all this was going forward in Ireland, it goes almost without saying that the movement for Repeal languished. The "rent" fell to close upon vanishing point, and O'Connell had to meet the foes of his own household. Dissension crept into the ranks. A body of men arose who came to distrust the great leader. These men were styled the Young Irelanders, and they soon gathered around them all that was best and bravest of the Repealers. The

leaders were Smith O'Brien, John Mitchell, Gavan Duffy, Thomas Davis, D'Arcy Magee, J. F. Meagher, John Martin, J. B. Dillon, and others. All told they were, perhaps, the noblest band of patriots Ireland has ever seen. Their courage was undoubted ; their aims were of the loftiest character ; they were men of unsullied reputation. Their defect lay in a total inability to suit means to the end they desired. They broke O'Connell's heart. They rushed into rebellion.

They rose in dark and evil days
To right their native land.

And although their record is as clean and pure as the sunlight, the movement fizzled out ingloriously, and with this escapade the Repeal agitation ceased to be a public force. What followed will be best told in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER III

FROM THE FAMINE TO THE FENIANS, 1848-1866

THE period of Irish history covered from 1848 to 1866 is, in some respects, one of the saddest on record. Exhausted by the Great Famine, the country lay like a corpse on the dissecting table. Everything suffered from seeming paralysis. No one knew what to do; and, consequently, many well-meant efforts went astray, and helped to make confusion worse confounded. A new element also intervened which increased the difficulties of the situation. The great Anti-Corn Law agitation had triumphed. Peel, amid the execration of the Tories, had changed his mind—had, in fact, been converted by the stern logic of the Irish famine. The Corn Laws were abolished; the era of Free Trade was inaugurated, and Ireland felt in a very peculiar manner the effects of the great change in English policy. Until now the English market for her produce had been in a manner protected. This poor ill-equipped country had now to compete with the whole world. Writing as a Free Trader, I have to admit that Ireland, a country almost entirely agricultural, and relying, to a large extent,

upon the English market, suffered severely by the change ; nor did she afterwards profit to anything like the same extent as England from Mr. Gladstone's fiscal policy. This great policy, which is Mr. Gladstone's best title to the gratitude of the people, conferred enormous benefits upon the masses in Great Britain. Duties were taken off articles in large and general consumption. Living was thus rendered cheaper and easier for the multitude. In Ireland the case was entirely different. The articles liberated and freed from duty were not articles used to any great extent by the peasantry of that country ; and, as a result, Ireland had many of the disadvantages and few of the blessings which elsewhere followed on the adoption of Free Trade. The situation, therefore, when this epoch began, was one of great gravity and of extreme difficulty. The years now under review saw the Great Famine clearances ; they witnessed the wreck of many an ancient family by the working of the Encumbered Estates Court Act ; they saw the growth of the Tenant League—a combination of North and South against the land system ; and, alas, they record its destruction by that old and fruitful cause of dissension—religious bickerings. That curious episode in Irish politics, the rise and fall of what was called the "Pope's Brass Band," followed. And, after years of despair, years during which absolutely nothing was done to raise the condition of the people, the Fenian Rebellion once more brought things to an issue, and threw England into one of those panics which come to her ever and anon in connection with Irish affairs. But I must not anticipate, and it will be

necessary to trace the events of the period somewhat in detail.

The Encumbered Estates Court Act was one of the first parliamentary efforts after the famine had subsided. On a review of the situation the statesmen of that day were forced to face the awful facts. It was not that labourers were starving, that farmers could not pay rent; it was found that at least one third of the Irish landlords were bankrupt and unable to perform those duties of property upon which so much stress was then laid. What was to be done? Things could not be allowed to go on as before. True, the people were working out their own salvation in the only way possible: they were rushing from the country in shiploads. No such exodus had ever been seen. But the bankrupt landlords—the men to whom the famine and the non-payment of rent spelt absolute ruin—could not go. And the Encumbered Estates Court Act was the device of English statesmanship for the cure of this evil. The idea had doubtless something behind it. “What Ireland wants,” said the political economist, “is capital. Nothing else will or can be of the slightest use. It does not matter whether the laws are good or bad—get money into the country. This is the road by which salvation can alone be secured.” And with this idea in their minds the Act was passed. In ten years the property of these bankrupt owners had been compulsorily sold to the extent of £20,000,000 sterling. A new race of landlords were thus introduced. Capital took possession of the country. And it is no exaggeration to say that, looking at the results broadly, the country was worse

rather than better for the change. It was not, as is generally supposed, that Englishmen became the owners of the soil—comparatively few English buyers were ready to run the risks. The purchasers were mainly Irishmen engaged in commerce, or the owners of large grazing tracts. And with this class was introduced for the first time in connection with land the commercial instinct. These men had no idea of philanthropy; they meant business. And with their advent, and the disappearance of the old landlords, the rents were raised all round, and to an extent that shocks the ordinary man to-day. One of the largest estates sold under the Act was that of Lord Mountcashel. A well-known solicitor in the north of Ireland who has made a study of the subject has supplied me with the following figures illustrative of the process that went on all over the country. The figures refer to a townland on the Mountcashel estate in County Antrim:—

Rental at Sale of Estate.	From 1875 to 1881.	First Judicial Rent.	Second Judicial Rent.
£7 2 6	£17 10 0	£13 0 0	£8 0 0
10 10 0	18 10 0	17 10 0	12 0 0
9 10 0	33 0 0	25 0 0	18 7 6
8 10 4	19 0 0	12 5 0	8 17 0
7 7 11	23 18 0	17 0 0	12 13 0
7 9 4	35 6 5	24 0 0	18 11 0
4 0 0	26 11 9	14 15 0	11 6 0
31 8 3	100 0 0	68 0 0	39 15 0
10 6 9	32 10 0	29 12 10	16 16 0
14 0 0	29 0 0	23 0 0	19 0 0
£110 5 1	£335 6 2	£244 2 10	£165 5 6

This was the spirit which dominated the situation at the time. The people, ruined by the famine and

contending with free trade, had now to meet the commercial spirit applied to land. They were everywhere rented upon their own improvements. There was trouble of course—how could anything else be expected? And to show the spirit in which Parliament faced the problem, it is only necessary to give one fact. Everybody knows to-day that the Irish tenant builds his own house and offices, drains the land, fences it, and makes the farm roads. At the date under review he, of course, had no legal property in all this work and outlay; it was all legally the property of the landlord. And those who bought under the Encumbered Estates Court Act, bought the fee-simple of the land and everything upon it. Thus the property of the tenant was sold to the new purchaser as if it belonged to the bankrupt landlord. The tenant, who had frequently been able to secure a *quasi* recognition of his rights from “the old stock,” as they were called, now found himself in the grip of a new class who were determined upon getting one thing—a certain percentage upon their invested capital. It was no use for the tenant to plead moral ownership of buildings, etc.; these had all been legally conveyed to the new purchaser. To everything upon the land he had secured a parliamentary title, and there, so far as he was concerned, was the end of it. A sad, sad business it all was. And the end was not yet. Agrarian crime ensued; the Ribbon Society, in default of law, set up its own courts. The members of that dreaded organisation sat in secret, heard cases of hardship, pronounced

judgment, and executed it until the country rang with horrors. But Parliament was satisfied. The tenant after all had only a moral claim; he had no legal property; and a landlord had the right to get whatever rent the swing of the market gave him. And so the play of the market *plus* fresh Coercion Acts was allowed to work out the problem.

And while the bankrupt landlords were thus being cleared out, a far greater clearance was being effected. During the three years of actual famine, 1845-47, it had been impossible for rent to be paid. The day of reckoning had now arrived. That there were far too many people on the land is indisputable—I have already dealt with this problem, and the case need not be re-stated here. And now they were to go. Eviction notices were served in tens of thousands. Processes for meal and provisions at the hands of the shopkeepers naturally followed. The courts were occupied with little else. What could the people do under such circumstances? It was impossible to pay; they had no money. Time was of little use. The land could not support the people seeking subsistence from it. They must go. But how passionately they clung to the land and to their misery! They were evicted in thousands. And now commenced that great exodus which has meant so much to both England and Ireland. The United States became an El Dorado for these poor people. There they went—there they go even to-day—and there they carried feelings of hatred and revenge which have complicated the relations between England and America ever since.

Between the years 1851 and 1861 one million and a half of Irish men and women had crossed the ocean. The traveller through Ireland sees to-day the ruined homesteads where these people once lived. They see the lands converted into sheep walks or grazing farms. Bullocks and sheep have taken the place of men and women. According to the political economist and the landlord it is all right and proper; but when the economist and the landlord have said their last word, the fact remains that the depopulation of large parts of the country was carried out with every accompaniment of horrid cruelty—that to-day this cruelty lives in the minds of the people who, deep down in their hearts, cherish the hope that the time may come when the Celt will be able to pay out the Saxon invader for it all. An evil inheritance verily is that to which England succeeded.

I propose to deal with the land question apart and separately. To my mind the position of the Irish tenant has been, and is now, the real difficulty of England in Ireland. But it is only necessary here to refer briefly to the occurrences of the period. Up to 1850 there had been no concerted action on the part of the tenants. The landlords had been masters of the situation. No—not quite masters. In saying this I exaggerate. The secret societies had to be counted with; and it may be said with perfect truth that every one of these organisations had its origin in agrarianism. But, apart from this terrible engine of despair, the landlord practically had everything, in and out of Parliament, his own way. In 1850, however, the League of North and

South sprang into existence. It was a combination of men from every part of Ireland, who felt acutely the character of the land system which prevailed in the country. They had witnessed its injustice; they knew all for which it was responsible; and, rising above creed, party, or prejudice, they met and formed the Tenants' League. The landlord organs denounced the new departure. And yet how moderate was the programme!

(a) A fair valuation of rent between landlord and tenant.

(b) No eviction whilst this rent was paid.

(c) The right of the tenant to sell his interest at the highest market value.

(d) A composition of the arrears question.

This was the demand in 1850. It took just thirty-one years to secure this modicum of justice. Thousands of houses were levelled to the ground in the interval. The crowbar brigade carried desolation right through the country. Fierce passions were engendered. Lawlessness prevailed. But there was no remedy. The people might be ruined. They had no representation in Parliament. There every proposal for reform was scouted and thrown out. To-day it was the Devon Commission presided over by a great Irish landowner; again it was Mr. Sharman Crawford, or Mr. Brownlow, or Sir Joseph Napier—it was all of no avail. The sacred rights of property had to be preserved. Until Parliament ceased to be a class institution, until the people got their hand upon the legislative machine, nothing could be done; and the Tenants' League perished, as so many organisations have before and since, on the altar of religious dissension. The storm which burst

upon the country in connection with the Ecclesiastical Titles Act wrecked it. Brave men like Gavan Duffy and Dr. M'Knight struggled hard against the tide. But the fierce passions engendered by Lord John Russell's foolish action could not be laid, and the movement perished without accomplishing much for the Irish tenant. Ten years later, Mr. (afterwards Baron) Deasy introduced a Bill on behalf of the Government of the day, which practically repealed all existing Acts, thus sweeping away whatever protection the tenant may have had—and it was not much—and reducing the whole question of the tenure of land in Ireland to a matter of contract, where, of course, free contract was impossible. The Bill of 105 clauses passed, I think, without challenge, and without a division. Mr. Deasy fell upon easy times and knew how to take occasion by the hand.

I do not stay to recount the action of the Sadleir and Keogh party, nor do I take note of any of those proceedings which at this period broke the hearts of Irish patriots. The truth is that Ireland all the while was simply stunned and stupefied. The Phoenix Conspiracy came upon the scene in 1858, was met in the usual way, and exploded. But in the sixties a cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, appeared on the horizon, which was big with fate for unhappy Ireland. I have now reached a point when I can avail myself of my own experience in this narrative. I arrived in Ireland in 1860. Since then I have lived a public life. It has been my good fortune to know, and knowing, to respect, many Irishmen who have suffered for their country. In some of the great agitations

which have taken place since 1860 I have had a share, and I am not, therefore, driven back upon authorities to the same extent. The Fenian Rebellion falls now to be considered. And the first question arising is as to the right of a people to resort to rebellion. What constitutes this right? That it exists no jurist will deny, and Englishmen who have so often stood behind and encouraged oppressed nationalities to this last resort, can hardly challenge its existence. Was rebellion justifiable in Ireland in the year 1866? This is the initial and serious question at this point. What had been the history of the country since the Union in 1800? Had there been a single day of prosperity? Had life for the people been anything but long-drawn-out misery? Had law ever intervened in their behalf? Had not neglect and misgovernment been the prevailing note? Every one of these questions must be answered decisively and emphatically against England. And it so happens that this very question had quite recently been the subject of fierce discussion. The Italian difficulty had been at issue. The English mind was at fever heat. The English newspapers were full of incitements to the subjects of Pio Nono, of Francis Joseph, and of Ferdinand to rebel. Garibaldi was the great hero of the time. And it was not the gutter press which so appealed to the people. The *Times* declared "that government should be for the good of the governed, and that, whenever rulers wilfully and persistently postpone the good of their subjects, either to the interests of foreign states, or to abstract theories of religion or

politics, the people have a right to throw off the yoke." "These," it said, "are principles which have been too often admitted and acted upon to be any longer questioned." And further on the same great journal affirmed that "the destiny of a nation ought to be determined, not by the opinions of other nations, but by the opinion of the nation itself. To decide whether they are well governed or not, or rather whether the degree of extortion, corruption, and cruelty to which they are subject is sufficient to justify armed resistance, is for the people who live under that government, not for those who are exempt from its oppression." There can be no doubt that in these extracts the *Times* laid down the sound constitutional grounds as to the right of a people to rebel against their rulers. But I cannot help thinking there is a point left out of consideration. Have any number of people the right to rise in rebellion without some assurance or chance of success? Is it the right of a leader to lead the people to what he must know to be ruin? It is all very well to talk of standing against tyranny, of staking all upon a single throw of the dice. In my opinion this is madness, and it is not justifiable. Writing calmly, and with all the facts in my mind, I have no hesitation in saying that rebellion was morally justifiable in Ireland in 1866. It has never been justifiable since that date. But inasmuch as no rebellion had ever the ghost of a chance of success, inasmuch as it only meant suffering for the leaders, and ruin for the led, it was barred alike by true patriotism and by common sense. This, of course, no high-souled patriot will

ever admit ; but it is my finding on the facts, and as such it must stand for what it is worth.

Meanwhile the storm was rising in Ireland and in the United States. The cessation of the calamitous war in America had liberated hosts of Irishmen, drunk with the lust of battle, and eager to use their weapons against England. The leader in the Fenian movement was James Stephens, a man who barely escaped the bullet from a policeman's rifle on that day when Smith O'Brien staked his all at Ballin-garry. Mr. Stephens, having had his chance, proceeded to America, spent years brooding over the wrongs of Ireland and how to right them, and ended by organising the Fenian conspiracy. The enrolments in America were prodigious. The whole Irish race in the States stood behind Stephens. In Ireland "the Captain," as he was called, had to face greater difficulties. Cardinal Cullen had come to Dublin from Armagh. As I remember this great prelate, he was a curious mixture of the Irish peasant and the Italian priest. He was emphatically a great churchman—with the patriot far back and held in reserve. His real centre was Rome, not Dublin. Possessed of an iron will, he ruled his archdiocese as if his clergy were a collection of automata. But withal he was a statesman, with clear and definite ideas, and with a fixed determination that nothing could set aside. In Dr. Cullen, Stephens had to meet an able and an astute opponent. The Church abhorred secret societies. To the clerical mind they were anathema. The Fenian organisation came under official condemnation—it was denounced from the altars ;

the Sacraments were refused to all connected with it. It became, and very soon, a war between the Church and the Fenian brotherhood. Stephens, of course, declared that it was a case of country against Cullenism—and, to a large extent, he was right. The struggle was fierce and keen while it lasted, and for a time the balance wavered. No one could tell to which side it inclined.

But at this time an event occurred which swung the people right on to the Fenian side. Early in 1861 Terence Bellew M'Manus died in San Francisco. M'Manus had been one of the '48 men. He was banished to Van Diemen's Land, escaped, and settled in the States. The idea now occurred to some one that his remains should be disinterred, conveyed to Ireland and buried in Glasnevin. It was a master stroke of policy. It was just what Stephens required. That the people would rise for such an occasion no one could doubt. Here was the body of a dead rebel coming home to rest under the sod! What funeral honours was that corpse not worthy of? Ireland rose to the idea. Great preparations were made in Dublin for the reception of the remains. A delegation from the States accompanied the coffin. But before the vessel had touched Queens-town, Cardinal Cullen diagnosed the situation and shot the bolt which more than anything else made the Fenian movement in Ireland. The clergy of the archdiocese were prohibited from receiving the remains in any of their churches. This was a cruel blow. But the men thus struck at struck boldly back. They hired the Mechanics' Institute in Lower Abbey Street. There in the theatre of that institu-

tion the remains of the rebel leader lay in state. Tens of thousands flocked to the building, marched past the coffin, and paid their last respects to the dead patriot. Then there was the procession to Glasnevin. Those who saw it declare that, with the exception of Mr. Parnell's funeral, nothing quite like it was ever seen in Dublin. That day and these proceedings made Fenianism. The people now said that "the Captain" was right. It was a case of Cullenism *versus* country. They elected to stand by their country—paying due respect, of course, to the Church.

The centre of the organisation was, of course, in the United States. There was centred the pent-up rage and fury of the expatriated Celt. Old men and women who had seen and felt the horrors of the Black Forty-Seven; young men and women who had left Ireland as children, and into whose ears the story of wrong and suffering had been poured—high and low, rich and poor, were alike keen for vengeance. No one ever seems to have asked what was meant; no one appears to have ever sat down and counted the cost. These people who out of their affluence and out of their penury poured money into the Fenian exchequer, never appear to have given a moment's thought to the real question—how they were to make war upon England. They planned a raid on the Canadian frontier; but, as they planned, did it ever occur to them what, under such circumstances, the attitude and the action of the American Government must be? Of course the raid was a fiasco. They talked, and loudly too, of the ships that were to sail for Ireland laden with

fighting men and war material. Had they never heard of the British Fleet? Were they not aware that the Coastguard line around Ireland was complete, and that any such enterprise was foredoomed to failure? Similarly at home the whole movement was conducted as if the English Government had no existence. There were risings in various parts of the South. Bands of men marched bravely upon police stations and were generally dispersed. There was no general or concerted action. The men were oftener than not unarmed. As a rising of a people in rebellion the whole enterprise was a sorry fiasco. It was not, however, this aspect of the case that told upon the country—if this had been all England would probably have shrugged her shoulders and passed on; but there were three dramatic and extraordinary incidents connected with the movement which arrested world-wide attention, and showed how dangerous was the feeling behind the organisation.

Fenianism was called, and was in theory, a secret organisation; but it was, of course, honeycombed with informers. Castle spies were amongst its chief agents. Pierce Nagle was one of the trusted confidants of "the Captain." A head constable of the Royal Irish Constabulary was the head centre in a southern district. And, independent of this source of leakage, no great pains appear to have been taken to secure secrecy. The *Irish People* newspaper, the organ of the brotherhood, was printed and published within a stone's throw of the Castle gate. All the chief officers of the organisation—Messrs. T. C. Luby, John O'Leary, and O'Donovan Rossa—were

on the staff of the paper. And so it came about that one day in September 1865 the Castle authorities, having satisfied themselves that the nettle was sufficiently rank to be pulled, swooped down upon the *Irish People* office and cleared the place of its contents. Simultaneous arrests of the leaders took place in Dublin and all over the country. But Stephens could not be found. Weeks elapsed, and finally he, too, was laid by the heels in Richmond Prison. Now all danger was said to be over and gone. Stephens, Rossa, Luby, O'Leary were all safe under lock and key. The Castle breathed once more; Lord Wodehouse smoked his cigar in peace; the Vice-Regal Lodge was happy. But the peace was of short duration. I shall never forget the excitement in Dublin on the morning when newsboys tore through the streets shouting "Escape of Stephens." And the news proved to be true. The Castle, the police, the prison officials had all been outwitted. It afterwards turned out that the warders and many of the staff of the prison were sworn members of the Fenian brotherhood—that the plan of escape had been arranged by these officials, and at last it had been carried out without a hitch. The effect was instantaneous. It was now felt that things were serious. Who could be trusted? It was known that Fenianism had seized hold of the Irish soldiers. There were those who felt some doubt about the police. It was clear that the prison authorities were involved. At last it was felt that a secret society, highly organised, was at once a dangerous and a difficult foe to deal with. Meanwhile Stephens

defied capture. He lived in the house of a poor woman in Summerhill. At any moment she might have secured riches by betraying him. She was true as steel, and died poor. Finally "the Captain" drove openly through Dublin in a carriage and four to Balbriggan, was rowed out to a lugger in waiting, and set sail for France! His comrades had in the interval been sent into penal servitude. There can be no question as to the effect of this dramatic incident upon the English mind. Fenianism might be absurd; but the escape was business, and good business too. Even the stoutest foe of the conspiracy admitted this much. But more was soon to follow. Kelly—the chief organiser after the police swoop on the leaders—had planned the liberation of Stephens, and, finding Dublin too hot, betook himself to Manchester. There he and a confederate named Deasy were arrested as vagrants. Suddenly the police were apprised of the value of their "vagrant" haul. Once again men breathed freely. The police were of some use after all. The new leaders of the brotherhood were safe. Safe indeed! In a day or two all England stood aghast. Kelly and Deasy were brought up at the police court in the ordinary way. They were remanded. Placed in the prison van with five or six drunks, they were driven off to Salford Gaol. Suddenly the van was stopped; a horse was shot; the traces were cut; twenty or thirty determined men with revolvers put the police guard to flight. Sergeant Brett, who was inside, refused to give up the keys. The door did not yield to hammers or crowbars. A shot was fired through the keyhole and killed poor Brett, who

had been looking through at the very moment. The two men were released and escaped. Police reinforcements now arrived. Arrests were made. The Irish quarters throughout Lancashire were searched, but Kelly and Deasy were nowhere to be found. The escape of Stephens was nothing to this. For daring and audacity there had been nothing quite like it. A mad shout went up. Panic ensued. Five men were sentenced to death for the murder of Brett. One was pardoned, it being proved that the verdict was utterly wrong; another was reprieved. Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien died to the refrain of "God save Ireland."

What times these were! How vividly they all arise in my memory as I write what is a bare recital of facts! History was, indeed, being made, and rapidly. But a third and most deplorable incident has now to be recorded—one which staggered the English mind more than anything else. A Fenian chief named Burke was confined in Clerkenwell Gaol. Suddenly one day a loud report was heard all over that part of London; it shook everything for miles around. When inquiry came to be made it turned out that some demented Irishmen had planned the escape of Burke by means from which Burke must have been the first sufferer. A barrel of gunpowder was placed against the wall at the point where Burke was supposed to take exercise. The result of the explosion was a list of killed and wounded surpassing many of the lists supplied by a South African battlefield. Twelve people were killed and one hundred and twenty were maimed and injured. It was a shocking calamity. It was not war—it was lunacy,

and worse. All England cried aloud for vengeance. Things were now felt to be serious. Fenian risings were one thing ; these tragedies in London and Manchester were on quite a different plane. Stern measures were demanded and granted. By the efforts of Church and State, and by the aid of dissensions and splits at home, and in America, Fenianism gradually ceased to be a force. Ireland began to listen to new voices, to new leaders. The artisan in the English and Scottish boroughs had now secured the franchise. Parliament was no longer a class institution. Men began to think seriously over the Irish problem. Day was about to break. The era of Gladstone and Bright was at hand.

CHAPTER IV

GLADSTONE: THE GREAT AWAKENING, 1866-1885

WE have at long last reached a turning-point in the dreary story of Irish suffering. It has indeed been, so far, a long night of endurance and of tears. For well-nigh seventy years scarce a ray of hope had passed over the horizon. Commencing with the break-up of the Irish Parliament, the nineteenth century had carried along with it a dismal record of carelessness and neglect, of hunger and misery, of want and famine, of strife and tumult, of secret societies and outrage, of coercion and rebellion, ending with an exodus of the people—"outcast weeds by a desolate sea, fallen leaves of humanity"—which threatened the depopulation of the country. The history of these years is gruesome reading, and people, generally speaking, avoid it. Nor is it, for obvious reasons, taught in Irish schools. It is common form to lay the weight of all the wrongdoing of the time at the door of the English people; technically I have sometimes fallen into the same mistake; but the real truth is, that the mass of the people of England were at once ignorant of the facts, and powerless to apply any remedy, wise or unwise.

The British artisan was not, during all these years, considered worthy of the rights of citizenship ; he was not possessed of the franchise. Parliament was wholly in the hands of the classes ; and the classes worked the machine, so far as Ireland was concerned, entirely in what they conceived to be their own interests. Newspapers were not in these days the power they are to-day ; the telegraph wires did not stretch to our remote towns and villages as they do now. Nameless suffering, consequently, passed unheard of and unnoticed. The Irish peasant suffered and endured because, in his own mistaken but devout phraseology, he thought it was "the will of God" that he should suffer. It was nothing of the kind. But now the dawn of a better day was at hand. Travellers in the Bernese Oberland have, no doubt, in watching the sunrise amongst the mountain peaks, been often struck with the curious light before the actual dawn ; soft and mellow it bathes everything in a subdued glory. It was so now in Ireland. Men began to recognise and to admit the mad element in Fenianism ; they felt the new atmosphere engendered by the Reform Bill in the boroughs ; they heard for the first time the trumpet-toned eloquence of John Bright pleading their cause. A greater than Mr. Bright was to come ; but the great Quaker—with his true instincts, his unique devotion, his unsurpassed eloquence—was, like John the Baptist of old, the real forerunner of the New Evangel. Coming to Ireland, he infused fresh hope into the people and into their leaders. Speaking at Limerick, in 1867, Mr. Bright struck the real and only possible keynote. He remembered where he

stood—in a ruined city, the City of the Violated Treaty. “Come,” said the great Tribune, addressing the Irish people, “let us to-night make a new treaty. On England’s part let it stand for justice ; on the part of Ireland let there be forgiveness.” Mr. Bright’s diagnosis of the situation was accurate. He did not reproach Ireland with folly and madness—nothing of the kind. He frankly admitted the whole case against England ; he recognised that “forgiveness to the injured doth belong.” The fury of what would now be called the Loyalist organs in Ireland knew no bounds. The epithets hurled at Mr. Bright were of the most shocking character. Day after day the storm beat round his head. Many of his own co-religionists even were lukewarm about his policy. But a note was struck then which settled many things. Mr. Bright’s mission to Ireland, and his masterly exposition of Irish wrongs, touched a large section of the English people. They awoke as if from a dream. Men everywhere began to ask why Ireland was discontented, rebellious, and disloyal. Inquiring for themselves they soon learned to doubt, and finally to disbelieve, the great organs of English opinion which had so long misled them. “Ireland had a clear case against England,” they said, “and justice must be done.” Never before in her long sad history had Ireland heard such language. The hour for reconciliation had come, and with the hour had come the man. Mr. Gladstone had not up to this time given any special attention to Ireland. In the fifties he had, indeed, been the instrument of inflicting grievous wrong upon the country by imposing fresh and abnormal taxation ; but the

Fenian conspiracy convinced him that something was radically wrong. The Clerkenwell explosion quickened his study of the question, and in 1868 the right honourable gentleman burned his boats—took his stand with Mr. Bright, and formulated a new policy for Ireland. The Upas Tree of Church privilege, of landlord tyranny, and of educational injustice was to be cut down. Ireland had, indeed, found a leader and a champion. No one foresaw then how far the first step would carry Mr. Gladstone, and, in truth, no one cared. “Justice to Ireland” was now the watchword throughout the kingdom. To follow Mr. Gladstone became a sacred duty for every one who loved liberty and fairplay. No time was lost. The Protestant Church in Ireland stood out in the eyes of all the world as an anomaly. It was the Church of a small minority of the people ; it numbered in its ranks most of the rich and well-to-do in the country ; it was grossly over-manned ; it was not a missionary church ; it was a badge of inequality—it was, in fact, indefensible. The Tory Government had proposed to still further cut down the number of bishops, and to carry out other reforms ; but this playing with the question was speedily disposed of. Mr. Gladstone introduced and carried his famous suspensory resolutions, stopping the creation of further vested interests until the decision of Parliament could be taken. The General Election of 1868 followed. Mr. Gladstone came back from the country with an enormous majority, and a Bill for the disestablishment of the Church was promptly introduced. The fight and the cause were alike great. The Bill roused the

warmest feelings of the combatants. Large numbers of good people deemed the attack upon the Church to be sacrilege; a still larger number were rallied to the cry of religious equality. After an eventful and stormy passage the measure received the Royal assent and passed into law. Nor can it be said that, in dealing with the Establishment, the nation was at all ungenerous. The Church retained the whole of the fabrics, including the two Cathedrals in Dublin. The life interests of the clergy were, of course, secured, and they received the power, which was largely availed of, to commute these interests in favour of a Church Sustentation Fund. A lump sum of £500,000 was handed over in lieu of private benefactions. A representative Church body was established, and the Church Temporalities Commission took charge of what may be called the business of winding up the affairs of the Establishment. The Regium Donum—a grant to the Presbyterian Church—and the grant to Maynooth College were also dealt with, a lump sum, representing so many years' purchase of the annual grants, being given to the legally constituted trustees of the two bodies.

Thus was consummated the first chapter in the new history of Ireland. The Act took effect as from the 1st day of January 1871. As I have said, the agitation aroused the bitterest feelings alike in England and in Ireland. This was inevitable. Irish Churchmen maintained then, and they maintain to this day, that the Act was mere spoliation and robbery; they prophesied evil things, and foretold serious injury to Protestantism, not to speak of religion. It was perfectly natural that

all this should be said, and sincere and honest Churchmen—I do not include in this term the mere political Protestant—believed most thoroughly in all the gloomy forebodings of the time ; but thirty years have come and gone, and it is possible now, without heat or passion, to take stock of Church history since that period. Most of the active combatants have passed away ; and, instead of a Church encumbered by State control, we have now one of the freest Christian organisations in the world. The old race of bishops, appointed by the Crown, with one illustrious exception, have disappeared, and at the head of every diocese in the country are men full of zeal, and inspiring the clergy with their own spirit. Parishes in certain remote districts have, doubtless, been united ; clergymen with livings but with no hearers have disappeared. The livings are not so fat as they were, but no Church rests upon a sounder financial basis, and it is doing God's work in the land with the respect and good wishes of the whole people. Disestablishment, which, it was said, would destroy the Church, has, in reality, infused new life into it. Mr. Gladstone breathed, as it were, upon the dry bones of a dead Protestantism—and they lived. Whatever has failed in Ireland, there has been no failure here. The Act which liberated the Irish Church from State control was a blessing alike to the Church and the country.

The Church Act passed, Mr. Gladstone at once proceeded to lay himself alongside the great Irish difficulty—the Land Question. In considering the action taken at this time great allowance must, of course, be made. No Commission had considered

the question since Lord Devon reported in 1845. Mr. Gladstone's advisers in Ireland were, to a large extent, landowners, or men otherwise interested in land; and it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the Act of 1870 was introduced and passed without an adequate survey of all that was involved in the question. A minority of Irish members took this view, and were fully vindicated by after events. But, whilst saying this, it has to be admitted that the legislation of 1870 was of priceless value. For the first time the principle was asserted that the tenant had a property in the soil. True, the assertion of this principle was timidly made; but the germ of all that followed in this direction is to be found in the Act of 1870. Mr. Gladstone's attention appears to have been mainly centred upon the burning question of Eviction. Of course the landlords' right to evict under certain circumstances could not be questioned; but in Ireland this right was pressed unduly, and great hardship and suffering undoubtedly attended its exercise. The question arising under such circumstances therefore was, how could capricious eviction be stopped whilst maintaining and preserving the legitimate rights of the landlord? Mr. Gladstone solved this knotty point by enacting an elaborate system of compensation, not alone for improvements, but for disturbance. And in this just and fair proposal, as Mr. Richey has pointed out, lay the wedge which was driven home in 1881. If a tenant was to receive compensation for improvements, and even for disturbance, it followed that Parliament recognised, not alone his property in the soil, but an occupation right as well. I doubt if the

Irish landlords saw the full force of what was being done. I am certain they did not appreciate the principle that was being asserted ; and, as a matter of fact, the measure passed without much ado. Amongst other notable things the Act legalised the various usages current under the Ulster Custom, and it, as the Church Act had done, gave facilities, strictly limited, for the purchase of land by occupying tenants. These facilities were not extensively used—the day for land purchase had not arrived ; occupying ownership had not then seized upon the public mind. The Act passed, as I have said, and the baser amongst the Irish landlords set themselves at once to undo it. They recouped their “compensation” expenditure by raising rents, and they knocked the bottom out of the Act by a system of contracts and agreements which the tenants were unable to resist, and by which they were contracted out of the Act. These men, and the whole landlord class, paid dearly for their folly. But the story of the price exacted on this account does not arise here ; it will be told afterwards. Meanwhile a beginning had been made. A clear recognition of the central fact of the land problem had received legislative sanction ; an instalment of a long overdue account had been paid. The end was not yet.

Mr. Gladstone did not rush at his third Irish problem. Neither the Church nor the land could afford to wait. It was different with the question of Higher Education. Everybody knew the dangers and the difficulties involved in the education controversy ; so the third branch of the famous Upas Tree was allowed to stand and wait. Parliament meanwhile

faced other and even graver issues, amongst these being the Ballot and the Licensing question. It thus came about that when, in 1873, the education problem came up for solution, the strength of Parliament had been largely expended, its enthusiasm had been all but wholly dissipated. The early years of a Parliament are alone for great enterprises; its even-tide is not for revolutions. But Mr. Gladstone persevered. The Bill for reforming the system of Higher Education was introduced, and bore the names of Mr. Gladstone and the Marquis of Hartington. Looking back, and thinking of all that has happened since, one cannot help regretting that this great and statesmanlike measure miscarried; and it is quite certain that many of those who combined to defeat it have lived to regret their action. Why is it that enthusiastic and earnest men so often fail to realise that best is the real enemy of good. Two years before the temperance reformers of the country, by their supineness and inactivity, where open opposition was not displayed, allowed the licensing proposals of Mr. Bruce to be defeated—proposals far ahead of anything in the Report of the Peel Commission which now occupies the public mind. It has taken thirty years of the wilderness to convince some men of the mistake then made. And those interested in Higher Education in Ireland committed precisely the same fatal error in regard to Mr. Gladstone's Education Bill. It was, as I have said, a great and statesmanlike proposal. It proposed to convert Dublin University into a great national centre, and to incorporate with it the Queen's University; to hand over the Divinity School attached to Dublin to

the Church Representative Body ; to affiliate colleges to be named in the first schedule of the Bill ; to abolish Queen's College, Galway ; and to prohibit the teaching of theology, modern history, and moral and mental philosophy. That Mr. Gladstone believed he had met and satisfied the Catholic claims permits of no doubt. The Bill had been drawn after consultation with such Catholic laymen as Lord O'Hagan and Mr. Monsell, afterwards Lord Emly. But whether the Hierarchy discovered that the Bill was defective so far as their interests were concerned, or whether further concessions were refused, the fact remains that they withdrew their approval, and threw over the men who were understood to be their plenipotentiaries. Dublin University and Trinity College also attacked the Government proposals. These bodies objected mainly to the affiliated colleges. They desired, like all great vested interests, to be let alone. And, between the Catholic Bishops on the one hand, and the Fellows of Trinity College on the other, the Bill was wrecked. Not that the second reading was defeated ; this stage was passed by a slender majority — a majority totally inadequate, however, to the forcing of the Bill through Committee ; and accordingly it was withdrawn. To-day I cannot help thinking the Catholic bishops would give a good deal to see any such proposed settlement. Eight-and-twenty years have passed, and still higher education for the Catholics of Ireland is an unsolved problem. To-day the question arouses fiercer and more uncontrollable passions than it did even then, and strong Governments, convinced of the justice of the Catholic claims, are deterred from approaching a

solution of the problem. Mr. Gladstone's idea was one great National University, with affiliated, and even denominational, colleges. It was, and is, the ideal settlement of an angry controversy ; and those responsible for the miscarriage of the scheme committed a great crime against the Catholic youth of Ireland. They have had abundant leisure for repentance.

Parliament was dissolved in 1874, and the Tories came into power as well as into office almost for the first time in the modern history of England. The Parliament which ceased to exist—the noblest that England had seen within the century—had done great work. It had attacked vested interests on every hand, and it paid the natural penalty. These interests, and those which stood expectant, coalesced, and the party which has always stood, and now stands, for the protection of what is called property, won the battle in the country. The record of the Parliament of 1874 is almost barren so far as Ireland is concerned. The early seventies were years of great agricultural prosperity ; prices and seasons were alike good ; and peace prevailed. The one measure of importance which the Tories passed was that for the establishment and endowment of the Royal University, a measure which will come up for review in another chapter. But the peace was not lasting. So long as good weather prevails, and good prices can be secured for agricultural produce, the Irish peasant, living from hand to mouth, drags along in peace. Let prices drop, let one or two bad seasons come—hunger and want follow over great areas of the country, and everything goes wrong. This is exactly

what happened in 1879. The years 1879 and 1880 were admittedly the worst that had been seen for a very long period. The potato crop was in many places wholly destroyed. At the best, and taking the average, it was less—considerably less—than half an ordinary crop. The mere money loss represented millions of pounds sterling. But this was not the worst. The food of the people disappeared. Other crops failed also, and the cry of famine was once more heard in the land. Relief funds were started; relief works were established. A great crisis was clearly at hand. The mutterings of the storm were soon audible. Landlords could not, in many cases, wait for their rents; evictions consequently took place under circumstances of great hardship. The Land League was formed, and ere people well knew where they were a state of war was proclaimed. Ireland has been the theatre of great events in the way of agitation. The demand for Emancipation, the call for Repeal of the Union, are illustrations of what is meant. These battle-cries united the people into great and formidable combinations; but never before in the history of the country had a stronger, or, in many respects, a more dangerous, manifestation of popular opinion been exhibited than the new movement produced. It was strong and dangerous because of two things. Emancipation was a sentiment; Repeal was a political cry. The Land for the People went home to the heart of every Irish peasant. Then it was strong and dangerous because of its leaders. Mr. Michael Davitt, the son of an evicted Mayo peasant—a Fenian—and one who had endured

the patriot's lot, was in the front. Mr. Parnell, who doubted and hesitated a good deal, finally "took off his coat" and joined issue with the landlords. There were other men in the ranks whom the people trusted, but, as a matter of fact, Mr. Davitt and Mr. Parnell dominated the situation. The attack was opened on April 28, 1879, at Irishtown, a small hamlet in County Mayo, and from that day the fiery cross was carried right through the country. The new departure was taken up by the Irish in the United States with whole-souled enthusiasm. Dollars for its support poured in by hundreds of thousands. In six months from the date of the Irishtown meeting, the British Government had to face the most formidable rising of the century.

Strictly speaking, and judged by its printed constitution, the Land League was a lawful and constitutional association. Its first article laid down the great principle of occupying ownership of the land as the ultimate object of the organisation. And I know of no real land reformer to-day who could not have accepted the theoretical programme of the League. It was in the measures which were deemed necessary to save the people, as the phrase went, that all the difficulty arose. As I have pointed out, evictions were proceeding, and more were threatened. Mr. Parnell's historic appeal to the Irish peasant to "keep a firm grip of his holding" rang through the country and "caught on." The cry of "hold the harvest" passed along the ranks. Evictions were resisted. Rents were not paid because, in numberless cases, it was impossible to pay, the land having produced little, if anything.

The dogs of war were let loose ; the secret societies got to work. In vain Mr. Davitt denounced crime and outrage. He spoke with the strength of O'Connell himself, but all to no purpose. Crime and outrage spread all over the land ; the whole country was shocked at the record ; and in the midst of the trouble Parliament was dissolved.

Mr. Gladstone came back to power in 1880 on the strength of the Bulgarian atrocities. The Tories were utterly routed in the country, and one of the strongest Liberal Governments which the century had seen took the reins. The state of Ireland could not, of course, be overlooked ; but there is incontestable evidence to show that when the new Cabinet was formed, Mr. Gladstone had no idea of further land legislation for Ireland. Whatever may have been the determination of the Cabinet on this point, their hand was speedily forced by events. Mr. W. E. Forster came to Ireland as Chief Secretary. The appointment was everywhere hailed as a good omen. He was known to be a strong man, whilst all his sympathies were understood to be with the suffering people. Mr. Forster's first move was an effort to stay evictions. The Bill passed through the Commons ; it was defeated in the House of Lords. The Irish people now knew what to expect ; the Irish landlords took fresh courage ; and finally, Mr. Gladstone, appalled, no doubt, at the sufferings of the people, and by the state of the country, once more "faced the music." This time the land problem was looked at straight in the face, the facts were boldly grappled with, and the Land Bill of 1881 was brought forward by the Government. It

was, in every sense of the word, a great, an heroic measure. It was maimed and injured in the House of Lords ; it has been to some extent destroyed by maladministration in Ireland ; but still it stands—the great Charter of Right for the Irish tenant. It substantially enacted what was known as the Three F's—"Fair Rent, Fixity of Tenure, and Free Sale"—the identical demand, be it remembered, of the League of North and South in 1851. It set up and established a tribunal to discriminate between the property of the tenant and the property of the landlord. This tribunal was authorised to fix a fair rent upon the latter ; the former was not to be rented. The tenant was to be irremovable unless for a breach of certain statutory conditions, and a qualified right of free sale of his interest was conferred. Mr. Parnell and the Irish party declined to vote for the second reading of the Bill, upon grounds I never could appreciate. And the great Irish leader went even further : he advised the tenantry of Ireland not to go into the Land Courts until certain selected cases were heard and decided. Mr. Parnell was so great a parliamentarian that one hesitates to condemn any action of his which is known to have been deliberately resolved upon, but it is well known that many of the ablest of his colleagues did not agree in this policy, and only submitted to it to preserve the solidarity of the party. Upon both issues thus raised Mr. Parnell was defeated. The abstention of the Irish party on the second reading of the Bill produced no result ; this stage was carried by an enormous majority. And in regard to the tenantry not going into Court immediately,

there was a wild rush to take advantage of the Act the moment the doors of the Court of the Land Commission were opened. The Bill had a stormy passage. During the prolonged Committee stage the Irish party worked strenuously for its improvement, and succeeded in many of their aims. In the House of Lords its fate was, for a time, uncertain. The wilder spirits were in favour of rejection, but wiser counsels prevailed, and, accepting Lord Salisbury's advice, the House of Lords—which is in reality a House of Landlords—passed the measure.

But still the tale of horror went on in Ireland. The latter part of 1881 and the year 1882 were dreadful years. Men supped daily of horrors. One day Lord Clanricarde's agent and his attendant were shot on the open road in sight of people trudging into the market at Loughrea. Again a lady—Mrs. Smith—was shot in the avenue leading to her own house, the bullet being, doubtless, intended for her brother-in-law. A whole family—the Joyces—were massacred at Maamtrasna. A bailiff (Huddy) and his grandson were shot near Clonbur, and their remains sunk in the adjoining lake. But a far more appalling tragedy was soon to be enacted. It was surmised that most of the terrible crimes which filled the daily newspapers were not committed at random. The intelligence that a new and great secret organisation had been formed spread and took possession of the public mind. Mr. Parnell and many of the Irish members were in gaol. Hundreds of what Mr. Forster called *mauvais sujets* were also under lock and key. Still the dance of death went on. Suddenly Mr. Forster was recalled ;

Lord Cowper resigned ; Earl Spencer was appointed Lord - Lieutenant, and Lord Frederick Cavendish succeeded to the Chief Secretaryship. The state entry of the Lord-Lieutenant was made on May 6, 1882. Before the sun went down that evening Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. T. H. Burke, the Under Secretary, lay lifeless corpses on the sward of the Phœnix Park. No one who spent that evening in Dublin can ever forget it. I heard the astounding news shortly after seven o'clock, and, hurrying to the office of the *Daily Express*, the awful intelligence was at that moment being formally conveyed by an official from the Castle. The streets, as I walked to the newspaper office, bore their usual Saturday evening aspect. Women were shopping ; men were loafing about ; the public-houses were busy. As I returned the same streets looked as they do on the morning of the Sabbath day. The fearful news had spread. Instinctively it was felt that this ghastly murder was the prelude to a general rising. Everybody rushed home to his own family circle. The extraordinary silence in Dublin that night was the most notable accompaniment of the great tragedy. Driving out next morning to the Park I met Lord Spencer, with a troop of dragoons surrounding his carriage, hurrying into a hastily-summoned meeting of the Privy Council. No man ever looked more grave or more ghastly—and no wonder. The news of the appalling tragedy paralysed and astounded the civilised world. Mr. Forster had been recalled, or had retired, because his policy was deemed to partake too much of the character of thorough. The recall was, as is now

known, the result of the Kilmainham Treaty. Lord Frederick Cavendish had come with a message of peace and reconciliation—and here was the reception accorded to the new policy. It is absolutely certain, however, that the murder of Lord Frederick formed no part of the murderers' plan. It was Mr. Burke who was marked out for assassination; and Lord Frederick fell a victim to his chivalrous conduct in attempting to defend his friend and colleague.

There was, of course, a loud and perfectly natural cry for repressive and defensive measures. The whole fabric of civil society, and of organised government, was felt to be assailed. A Coercion Bill was rushed through. The forces of the Crown were everywhere strengthened. But the murderers were still at large. A special Commission was issued for the trial of a number of men who were charged with murder in the West. Jurors were threatened, and, to the horror of the whole city, Mr. Denis Field, who had true deliverance made between a prisoner and the Crown, was all but done to death near his own doorstep. Another juror, Mr. Michael Barrett, it was afterwards discovered, had escaped a similar fate by a mere accident. Public feeling was deeply moved. The police were supposed to be wholly at fault. But the "Invincibles" just overdid it, and, out of the attack upon Mr. Field, came the unravelling of the great plot. Biding their time, but keeping watch over every suspect, a swoop was at last made by the police. Every one save Tynan, the mysterious "No. 1," was secured. The usual crop of informers turned up—in fact, there

was said to be a race for the chance of giving Queen's evidence. The conspiracy was riddled. Five men were hanged ; others went into penal servitude, from which they have just emerged ; and the country breathed freely once more. Sir George Trevelyan succeeded Lord Frederick Cavendish.

Mr. Gladstone was beaten on the Budget in 1885, and the Tories once more came into office—it can hardly be said they came into power. The record of the party during this eventful period has never received the treatment it deserves. Lord Randolph Churchill was then rising into fame, and, probably more than any one else, influenced his chiefs. The first thing done—and the Tory party deserve unspeakable credit for it—was to pass the Land Purchase Act. By this measure the sum of £5,000,000 sterling in cash was placed at the disposal of the Irish farmers for the purpose of purchasing the fee simple of their holdings. The State advanced the whole of the purchase money. The tenant purchasers paid the amount back, capital and interest, in forty-nine yearly instalments. At the end of this period they possessed the fee simple of the land. It was the beginning of great things, and the result will be seen after many days. But whilst the Tories were thus securing the support of the Irish vote in the House, they were proceeding cautiously on other and more questionable lines. Lord Randolph sneered openly at governing a country by coercion ; a review of the Maamtrasna trials was even hinted at by some of the leaders. Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Parnell had a secret interview regarding Home Rule ; and Lord Salisbury, at Newport, held

language on this question which, to say the least, was ambiguous. In the midst of all this a General Election was precipitated. No more fateful election ever took place. The franchise had been extended to the county householder, so that it was a real appeal to the country. Mr. Gladstone went to Midlothian, and, not seeking to burke the Irish difficulty, he asked the country to give the Liberal party a majority that would enable him to settle the question independent of Mr. Parnell. Much was made of this sentence during the Home Rule controversy, but it is quite clear what Mr. Gladstone meant. He had noticed the attitude of the Tories toward Ireland and the Irish members, and he foresaw that if they were returned, and had to depend upon the Irish vote, complications of a startling character were certain to arise. His idea then appears to have been that a strong Liberal party should face the issue seriously once and for all. To be dependent upon Mr. Parnell's support meant either a galling servitude or a complete surrender. Mr. Gladstone failed to secure the majority he asked for. On the contrary, when the battle closed and the lists were made up, it was found that the electorate had placed the balance of power in Mr. Parnell's hands. The Irish leader was master of the situation ; to whichever side he inclined the vote was decisive.

And now commenced that great epoch in the history of our country which has left so deep a mark upon everything, which has broken up political parties, and greatly retarded the settlement of those urgent social problems upon which the welfare and real progress of the country depend.

The facts of the great controversy which now arose, and to which I have referred, will come up for review in the next chapter. Here, and in closing the record of what I have ventured to call the Great Awakening, it may be of service to recapitulate what has gone before. It is without doubt a great and splendid record. From the Liberals Ireland received—

- (a) An Act disestablishing the Protestant Church.
- (b) An Act to reform the Land Laws (1870).
- (c) An Act establishing the Ballot.
- (d) An Act conferring the franchise on the county householder.
- (e) A second Land Act (1881).

And there had been, as I have described, a real and genuine effort to solve the problem of Higher Education. From the Tories the country secured—

- (a) The Royal University.
- (b) The first Land Purchase Act.

No one can say that these were lean or barren years. It is the habit of some politicians, who have never troubled to look under the surface of things, to decry the efforts made, and to accuse the Irish people of gross ingratitude, because as a nation they pressed forward other claims. No one who has studied even this narrative, so far as it has gone, can well take that view. The reforms achieved were essentially just; they were long overdue; they ought to have been passed because they were just. But this was not what took place. It required the Fenian rising to arrest the attention of English statesmen to the serious grievances of Ireland. Some of Ireland's best sons had to go

into penal servitude, and to endure years of agony, before even Mr. Gladstone's eyes were opened. The Church Act and the Land Act of 1870—the first-fruits of the Gladstonian era—unquestionably received their great impetus from Fenianism. Mr. Gladstone never denied what was apparent. And so with the Land Act of 1881. The Duke of Argyll joined the Cabinet of 1880 under the belief that the Act of 1870 had closed the book of Irish land legislation. His Grace left the Government when it was resolved to introduce the Bill of 1881. Does anybody believe that this great and revolutionary measure, this measure which upset all the current theories of land tenure,—does anybody believe that this great reform would have been pressed had the Land League not been called into existence? Nobody who knows the facts doubts that Mr. Gladstone's hands were again forced. The right honourable gentleman had all the prejudices of the English landlord class; he had denounced the three F's as robbery; and it must have been with supreme reluctance that he embarked once more upon the troubled sea of Irish Land Reform. But the public safety is, after all, the supreme law. Law and order could not be maintained in Ireland when the law was founded on palpable injustice; and so the League and its lawlessness prevailed.

Gratitude in politics is a virtue all but unknown. It has been well defined as consisting of a lively sense of favours to come. The Irish people had secured these great boons, and they well knew their value, by strenuous and painful sacrifices. There was no reason why they should rest and be thankful.

CHAPTER V

GLADSTONE: THE GREAT SURRENDER, 1885-1886

MR. GLADSTONE returned from Midlothian carrying a heavy burden. His request to the country, publicly made, had not been granted. His forces, it is true, greatly outnumbered those arrayed under the Tory leader, but the eighty-six Irish members, marshalled under Mr. Parnell, complicated and commanded the entire situation. One can easily imagine the thoughts that stirred within the brain of the "old man eloquent" as he surveyed the battlefield. For a long series of years he had been contending with the Irish members; he had imprisoned them; they had been suspended from the service of the House almost in a body with his sanction; the rules of the House of Commons had been revised and altered in order to restrain, if not to silence them; the Closure had been applied for the first time in English parliamentary history to dry up the floodgates of their eloquence. On the other hand, Mr. Gladstone had given years of his life to the reform of Irish grievances, to the righting of Irish wrongs. The Church Establishment had disappeared at his touch; a revolution

in land tenure had been accomplished ; the ballot had secured freedom for the voter, alike from priest and landlord ; and the franchise had been extended to the mass of the people in town and country. These were great and notable achievements ; and here, after everything had been done, after coercion had been mercilessly applied, and reform had been launched on its beneficent mission,—here were eighty-six Irish members drawn up in battle array, prepared to contend for the right of Irish self-government, prepared to sell their votes to either English party at this price, and determined to make Government impossible if their demand was refused. It was, indeed, a cruel position, one for which the English electorate were wholly responsible.

But Mr. Gladstone was a man not easily daunted. He was possessed of splendid courage, and, like the strong resolute man he was, he faced the facts. Lesser men might have retired disgusted. Mr. Gladstone held on. The Tories were still in office, and apparently were prepared to hold their places until expelled therefrom by a vote of no confidence. This vote was moved and carried immediately on the meeting of Parliament, and Mr. Gladstone very soon found himself at the old trade of Cabinet-making. But Home Rule was now in the air. It was noticed that whilst Mr. Chamberlain voted for the expulsion of the Government from office, Lord Hartington abstained. Lord Hartington had been all through these years the trusted colleague, the intimate friend, of Mr. Gladstone ; his absence from the division was therefore noted, and keenly canvassed. And the reason for his abstention soon

became apparent. Mr. Gladstone had then practically decided for Home Rule. It was a momentous decision, the most momentous taken by an English leader during the century. One can only surmise what took place—the reasoning which finally prevailed ; but there stand out, clear and distinct, several of the arguments which must have finally sufficed to turn the scale to the Home Rule side. In the first place, there were the events which marked the five months of 1885 during which, by virtue of the Irish vote, the Tories held office. Lord Randolph Churchill, as I have said, had openly sneered at government by coercion ; but others had gone further, and it was quite understood that if the Tories came back to power coercion was to be dropped. It was on this understanding that the Irish vote in Great Britain was cast against Mr. Gladstone and in favour of the Tory candidates. Mr. Gladstone's chief Irish adviser at this time was Lord Spencer ; and it is known that he was deeply impressed by the new position taken up by the Tory party. Lord Spencer held then that order could not be maintained in Ireland by means of the ordinary law. He believed that to govern the country by means of the ordinary law alone was an impossibility. Certainly all history supported this view. And I have no doubt that the Tory attitude on this point materially influenced Mr. Gladstone's mind.

Then it was perfectly impossible to overlook Lord Salisbury's famous speech at Newport. This speech was full of suggestion ; it referred to Home Rule constitutions abroad ; it declared that local government—which the Tory party, with Lord Salis-

bury as Prime Minister, has since conferred upon Ireland—would be worse than the establishment of an Irish Parliament. Added to all this, there was the astounding fact, perfectly well known then to the leaders of both parties, that Lord Carnarvon, the representative of the Queen in Ireland, had formally and secretly conferred with Mr. Parnell, and had avowed himself a Home Ruler.

All these things must have been present to Mr. Gladstone's mind when he brought himself alongside the issue. But there were other considerations which must have exerted a great and determining influence upon the fateful decision. Mr. Gladstone had a supreme reverence for Parliament, and especially for the House of Commons. To his mind the Commons of England represented all that was best in the country. He was steeped in parliamentary tradition; he had shared in much of the glory of the House of Commons; and he recoiled with something like horror from proceedings which tended to lower the character of that famous assembly. He recognised slowly, but surely, the presence of what Mr. Redmond the other day called "a foreign element" in the House. Coercion had been tried upon this element; it had failed. A long course of justice to Ireland had been tried. The Irish people were not, as some politicians think, ungrateful; but they refused to sell what they considered their birthright for any mess of pottage whatever. Was it possible to go on with this "foreign element" acting as sand in the legislative machinery? Could the character of Parliament be maintained? Mr. Gladstone, rightly or wrongly, answered these questions in the negative. Again,

Mr. Gladstone was a great constitutionalist. Till this period no Irish majority had ever made this demand for self-government. It may be said, of course, that the Irish people had never previously been fully represented ; but, at all events, the demand for self-government had never been enforced even by a majority, not to speak of a majority numbering much more than two-thirds of the Irish members. The consent of the governed is a great axiom in politics. Here it was being grossly violated. Could Parliament go on compelling the unwilling allegiance of the Irish people? Mr. Gladstone declared against the attempt. And finally, there is good reason for believing that he set himself to the study of the means by which the Act of Union was carried. Like most Englishmen, he probably had some idea that Pitt's methods had been of a shady character. It is quite certain that he now realised the actual facts for the first time, and his spirit burned within him : he recoiled from the whole transaction.

I have been endeavouring to get a glimpse into Mr. Gladstone's mind as he studied the great question upon which his party was destroyed, and he himself suffered shipwreck at the close of a long and noble life. People say that he surrendered to Mr. Parnell because of lust of power and of office. I doubt if ever there was a public man in England against whom this charge could be less truly made. There are others who affirm that his conversion was a sham, that for years he had been a convert on the way, if not an actual Home Ruler. This charge I believe to be equally baseless. Statesmen in Mr. Gladstone's position cannot afford to take either long steps or

long views in advance ; and, although his mind must have often turned to the subject, it being daily forced upon his attention, there is not a particle of evidence to warrant the charge of hypocrisy. No ; as one who sorrowfully and most reluctantly left the Liberal party in 1886, and whose public life has since been largely spent in resisting the Home Rule policy, I desire to say that in my opinion Mr. Gladstone came to the great decision inspired by the loftiest motives, and with nothing but the welfare of England and Ireland in view.

But, on the other hand, Mr. Gladstone was never good at seeing the other side of any question. He had marvellous power, as Mr. Forster once said, in persuading himself, and other people as well. But the more he was consumed with any subject, the less likely he was to give adequate consideration to the case and the arguments on the other side. It was so now, and in the present instance. To the cause of Home Rule for Ireland he gave his whole soul and mind and spirit. To say that he was enthusiastic is not to express the real condition of his mind ; he was literally frenzied, and so, arguments that would have told with any ordinary man, were absolutely thrown away upon him. For example, he cannot have fully considered the strain he was about to place upon the Liberal party. That party had stood steadily, heroically, for justice to Ireland. It had never been a Repeal or a Home Rule party. On the contrary, the tradition of the party was all against dismemberment. As I have already pointed out, Mr. Fox and Lord Grey had been strenuous opponents of the Union ; but, once

accomplished, they sternly refused to consider Repeal. Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell were strong Unionists, so were Macaulay and Sir James Graham. O'Connell had, in fact, never made the slightest parliamentary headway with his Repeal proposals. And now, what could Mr. Gladstone have expected? The General Election of 1885 had been fought on Unionist lines. With the exception of men like Sir Wilfrid Lawson, Mr. Joseph Cowen, and Mr. Samuel Storey, no Liberal candidate had given the slightest countenance to Irish Home Rule; and here the party was suddenly called upon to write it on their banners, to make it the first and main plank of their platform. Mr. Gladstone knew by this time that he could not carry with him Lord Selborne or Lord Hartington, Mr. Bright or Mr. Goschen. He probably had hopes of Mr. Chamberlain, who all through the early stages of the great controversy was not the strong man he afterwards became. But difficulties did not daunt Mr. Gladstone; he had made up his mind; he knew the lions that were in the path. And he pictured in his own mind a settled Ireland, working harmoniously in a great Imperial partnership; the Parliament of the United Kingdom freed from all its difficulties to carry to full fruition those great social reforms that were clamouring for settlement. He persuaded himself of that which would have been true in 1866, viz. that Ireland was grossly misgoverned. This was enough. Nothing could daunt him, and the great man rushed upon his fate.

Again, Mr. Gladstone cannot possibly have given due or adequate consideration to facts as they existed in Ireland. I have always said, publicly

and privately, that there was much to be said for the abstract principle of Irish self-government. In the first place, the mass of even educated Englishmen were profoundly ignorant of Ireland, of Irish life, of Irish needs and requirements. The rush of the tourist season took them to Scotland in tens of thousands. Ireland was an unknown and an unexplored country. They, no doubt, heard of its distress, of its troubles: what they heard only made them the more anxious to avoid it. England was, in fact, governing Ireland without knowledge, and, up to quite a recent period, without even sympathy. Had Ireland been in the position of Scotland, had her people been of one race, of one religion, had they been united, and had the best of her sons come forward and made the demand for a reasonable measure of self-government, the case would have been unanswerable.¹

But so far from this being the case, let us see how matters actually stood. There were, as Sir George Trevelyan once truly and happily put it, "two Irelands." There were two races and two religions. Hundred of years had passed since the great Confiscations under the Tudors, under James and Cromwell. It is true there had been amalgamation in certain districts: the Cromwellian troopers in Tipperary intermarried, and became more Catholic and more Irish than the Irish themselves; but to all intents and purposes the two races had never blended. In 1886 they stood intact and apart—the colonists alert, active, well-to-do; the natives backward, sullen, with all those marks that conquest and servitude invariably stamp upon a people. How

could Mr. Gladstone ever have expected by such a process to harmonise this compound of oil and water? The Englishry in Ireland heard of the fate in store for them with something akin to despair and dismay. A wild throb of delight ran through the Irish ranks. All the evil feelings of centuries were at once kindled into the fiercest of flames. The Englishry felt that they were about to be deserted and betrayed; the Irish felt that once more they were coming by their own—that they were now to be masters in their own land. It was for all the world as if the present Government had suddenly dismissed Lord Milner, thrown over the South African loyalists, and installed the Dutch as the governors of South Africa, with something akin to independence. Had Mr. Gladstone taken all this into account? True, he proposed terms of escape for the real English garrison—the Irish landlords. But for the mass of the Englishry—as I call them for want of a better name—there was to be no release. They must submit to be governed by those whom they had been brought up to look upon as their enemies. It soon became an impossible situation. The Ulster problem at once dominated everything; this was the plea that told upon every platform. In the end it settled the issue. But, granted a homogeneous people, a people with the same objects, and determined to work in harmony for the good of the country, there was hardly an argument against self-government. It was the Home Rulers who constituted the fatal objection to Home Rule.

Once more, had Mr. Gladstone given due weight to the enormous parliamentary and constitutional

difficulties that blocked his path? He had not proceeded far upon the road ere they were encountered in all their force. Granted a Home Rule Parliament, what was to become of the representatives of Ireland at Westminster? Were the Irish members to be retained or disbanded? It did not matter what was done; whether they were retained or disbanded the difficulties were all but insurmountable. Mr. Gladstone first proposed that Ireland should have no representation at Westminster. This was strictly logical, and it met with the approval of Mr. Parnell and the Irish representatives. These gentlemen cared nothing for the Empire; Imperialism meant nothing in their eyes; they cared only for their own country, and desired to spend and be spent in her service alone. But to work this theory out shattered all idea of an Imperial Parliament. The Irish members dismissed, the great institution became merely the Parliament of Great Britain; Ireland became a colony managing her own domestic affairs, but without representation at Westminster. The advocates of Imperial Federation, men like Mr. Cecil Rhodes, for example, saw in this a fatal blow to their dreams. They had pictured in the dim and distant future a great Imperial Assembly of the Race sitting at Westminster—it was, and is, a grand and glorious dream—but here was a staggering blow to any such idea. If the Irish members were not retained at Westminster, it would be vain ever to dream of colonial representation. It was to resist this disintegration policy Mr. Rhodes was said to have contributed £10,000 to the funds of the Irish party, Mr. Parnell having

agreed to oppose the exclusion of the Irish members. But the other horn of the dilemma was even more difficult. Mr Gladstone's second Home Rule Bill (1893) proposed to retain the Irish members (at least eighty of the number) in the Imperial Parliament. Around this suggestion the storm of debate in Parliament and in the country raged. The Irish were to have a Parliament of their own forsooth, and they were to govern England and Scotland as well! It was felt to be impossible. Proposals of an "in and out" character were made: the Irishmen were to vote only on Imperial questions; but these only furnished fuel for the fire, pabulum for debate. The idea was ridiculed; it killed the Bill, and ended the controversy. Surely Mr. Gladstone must have foreseen all this, and more. Whether he did so or not he went forward full steam ahead.

Meanwhile, Parliament having met, and Ministers having been dismissed, the Home Rule Government had to be formed. It was soon made apparent, therefore, how men stood. Lord Hartington, Lord Selborne, Mr. Goschen, Mr. Bright, and Sir Henry James stood out. Lord Spencer, Lord Kimberley, Sir William Harcourt, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Mr. Chamberlain, and Sir George Trevelyan followed the old leader. Mr. Gladstone speedily announced his new policy—tentatively, but with sufficient clearness—and in a week or two the first Home Rule Bill was tabled. Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan retired from the Government, and a serious rupture in the Liberal party became certain. These were memorable days at Westminster. Meetings of what Mr. Gladstone

called the "dissentient" Liberals were constantly held. The Bill was discussed down to the meanest detail. Lord Hartington was unquestionably the strong man of that time. Next to the noble lord Sir George Trevelyan was perhaps the most implacable foe to the Bill. His famous phrase that there could be no half-way house between Union and Separation summed up the opinion of a very large section of the Liberal party. Mr. Chamberlain had previously sanctioned a policy of devolution for Ireland, which made his position more difficult, and at this period, he certainly was not the most relentless of the party. Meanwhile the Gladstonians were not idle; waverers were taken in hand, the doubtfuls were looked up. What are called the resources of civilisation, but which I prefer to call the resources of a government, were freely applied. The constituencies and the party organisations were worked for all they were worth. Weak men surrendered, and went with "the Old Man"; doubtfuls were plied and pressed by every conceivable form of argument. And, amid all this persuasion and cajolery, the debate on the second reading of the Bill commenced. It lasted for many nights, and was worthy of the subject and of the occasion. It revived the old glories of the House of Commons. The night of June 7, 1886, which saw the division, was a night never to be forgotten. The House and the approaches to it were simply packed. A bare handful of members were absent, and these entirely owing to illness. The result was even then doubtful. How many Liberals would vote against Mr. Gladstone?—this was the doubtful quantity. The tellers against

the Bill were Mr. Brand, now Lord Hampden, and Mr. W. S. Caine—two Liberals. When the last man had passed the doors, and the tellers reported the numbers to the clerk at the table, the issue paper was handed to Mr. Brand. The Bill had been rejected ! A wild shriek of delight rang through the House ; the Irishmen answered back with angry and defiant shouts ; Lord Randolph Churchill stood up on the seat and waved his hat in triumph ; and finally the tellers advanced to the table and announced the numbers—311 for the Bill, 341 against it, majority 30. Something like ninety Liberals had followed Lord Hartington and destroyed Mr. Gladstone's hopes and plans.

A General Election speedily followed, and the debate was transferred from the House of Commons to the country. Then Mr. Gladstone must have realised the serious mistake he had made in forcing the question. Had he proceeded, it was argued, as he did on the Irish Church question, the result might have been entirely different. On that occasion he proceeded by resolution. The country had time to consider the general principle of the proposal unencumbered by details. Difficulties were discussed ; rough places were made smooth, crooked places straight. Success was thus assured. Here the country was attempted to be taken by storm. Had Mr. Gladstone, it was said, submitted a resolution in favour of Irish self-government, the House of Commons would have agreed to it ; the country would have had time to consider the question, and the chances were that in another session some Bill might have been carried. But the country refused

to be rushed. Many Liberals held that they had been betrayed ; men everywhere affirmed that Mr. Gladstone received no mandate in 1885 for any proposals such as he afterwards submitted ; and the result of his appeal to the country was a disastrous defeat. The Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists, as they were now called, had a majority of 86 in the new Parliament. The balance of power was now with Lord Hartington and his supporters.

In order to complete the Home Rule episode I must break in upon the chronology of this work ; and although I shall have in the next chapter to return to the Parliament of 1886, I propose to follow the Home Rule question to its parliamentary demise.

A Conservative Government, supported by Lord Hartington and his party, took office in 1886. They were immediately assailed by the combined English and Irish Home Rulers. The land was once more the great rallying cry. The season of 1885-86 had not been good ; the potato crop had again to a limited extent given way. Mr. Parnell, accordingly, introduced a Tenants' Relief Bill which proposed to reduce the judicial rents by one-half pending consideration and inquiry, and to enfranchise the leaseholders. It was not a Bill seriously devised to meet a great emergency ; it was a Bill well calculated to embarrass the new Government, and especially their Irish supporters. The Bill was defeated, and a Royal Commission, presided over by Lord Cowper, appointed. But soon the wilder spirits got to work. Led by Mr. William O'Brien, and, it is said, without the sanction of Mr. Parnell, the Plan of Campaign was started. This new engine of agitation never entirely

caught on. It proposed non-payment of what were called excessive rents, and the handing over of a fair rent to be held by trustees. But where the Plan was adopted it speedily became a very formidable weapon with which to fight the landlords. In a surprisingly short space of time a formidable land war was in progress, and the war had features all its own. Agrarian crime of the worst type—*i.e.* murder and outrage—did not follow in the wake of the Plan; by whatever means, and by whatever power, it is certain that these were repressed, the assassin's arm was stayed; but a system of boycotting was brought into play, under which horrid cruelties were perpetrated. Men under ban drove their cattle to market or fair—and drove them home again. No man would buy or even look at them. Shopkeepers who supplied marked men with the necessities of life found that no one else would enter their places of business. Men who paid their rents were isolated. At "church or market, mill or smithy," no one would speak to or have dealings with them. I personally saw much of this sad and horrid work in the South and West during these years. It was an odious and an unjust policy. Technically it may be defended. I know all that can be said about "exclusive dealing," as Mr. Gladstone called it; but in its essence, and as it was remorselessly applied, the whole thing was cruel and unjust. It could not in the end prevail. Then, after things had run their ordinary course, the eviction campaign commenced. There were, of course, cases of great hardship, but I feel compelled to declare here that the main part of this

eviction campaign was the result of the war deliberately proclaimed. Not a tenant, for example, need have been stirred on the Vandeleur estate had a fair settlement been honestly desired by the authors and leaders of the Plan. Not one of the poor illiterate peasants on the Olphert lands at Falcarragh need have slept a night from under their own roof-trees had the voice of reason been listened to. Lord Clanricarde nobody—not even his own class—cares to defend. But it is my deliberate conviction—and I made exhaustive inquiries at the time—that most of the evictions of that period might have been, with ordinary tact and discretion, avoided. The eviction campaign, however, was utilised to some purpose in England. English friends of Home Rule visited Ireland in great numbers, witnessed these horrid transactions, and went back full of the cruelties that were being perpetrated. Doubtless things were bad enough, but they were not always what they appeared to be, and strangers, alike to the country and the people, were easily imposed upon. The evicted tenants were, of course, the subjects of great commiseration; and they, indeed, deserved it all. They were housed in huts, erected frequently within sight of their old holdings and homes. The lands were ruthlessly boycotted; no man dare put a foot upon the soil. The landlords, in some cases, attempted to cultivate the land; new tenants were imported; but it cannot be said that success attended any of the emergency schemes. Meanwhile the eviction scenes were made to do great work in England. The deplorable incidents of the campaign had been photographed, and, thrown on the screen

at limelight exhibitions, did great electoral service for the cause. Mr. Balfour meanwhile, and after a great parliamentary struggle, had passed the Crimes Act. Under its provisions many of the leaders of the Plan were imprisoned and otherwise dealt with. English tourists who broke the law fared no better. But whilst all this tended to settle Ireland, it kindled a flame in England, Wales, and Scotland which could not be extinguished. Election after election took place; the Unionists were invariably defeated. During the entire six years they won, I think, one seat—that of Doncaster. It was depressing work, as perhaps I realised more than most men, and when 1892 arrived — *i.e.* when the natural time for the dissolution of Parliament was reached—Mr. Gladstone came back to power with a majority, including the Irish, of 40. The Irish evictions had done their work; they had been too much for the English people. Irish land and Irish landlordism had once more proved a stumbling-block. It is certain that Lord Clanricarde accounted for many thousands of votes.

Mr. Gladstone returned to power carrying the weight of eighty-three years. No such spectacle has ever been seen in England. There have, no doubt, been statesmen in harness before who carried the great burden of old age; but in Mr. Gladstone's case the circumstances were wholly different to anything that had ever been seen. At the age of eighty-three he was in charge of a measure designed to effect a great constitutional change—in charge, in fact, of a revolutionary scheme. No one who saw him during that memorable session can ever forget

either the man or his work. Early and late he was at his post. Upon this occasion he had the support of a whole-souled lieutenant in the person of Mr. Morley, who had become Chief Secretary for Ireland. But Mr. Gladstone never parted with his responsibility; he piloted the ship through all the storms, and past all the shoals and quicksands of that eventful time. The Home Rule Bill of 1893 differed in one important respect from its predecessor of 1886: the Irish members were to be retained, not dismissed. But, apart from this point, it was substantially the same Bill. Some of those who had fought hard against the first Bill—Sir George Trevelyan amongst the number—had now rejoined the party, and were fighting under Mr. Gladstone's leadership. On the other hand, Mr. Chamberlain was the stoutest foe of the new Bill. There is no finer debater in Parliament, no more relentless or implacable opponent of man or measure, than the member for West Birmingham; and he scored heavily in these great debates. But so far as the House of Commons was concerned, the debate went for nothing. Men had now taken sides; the country had steadied itself after the first shock; not a vote was changed; and the Bill was sent to the Lords by pretty much the same majority as sent Mr. Gladstone back to power. The fate of the Bill in the Upper Chamber was assured. With the exception of Lord Spencer and Lord Kimberley, I doubt if it had any real friends in that Assembly. Lord Rosebery stuck to Mr. Gladstone, but his Home Rule faith was not of the character that moves mountains. The second reading was rejected by

the enormous majority of 378—41 for the Bill and 419 against it. So, for the time at least, ended this great controversy.

Two great and far-reaching events fall to be recorded before this chapter is closed. It is commonly said that Mr. Gladstone desired once more to dissolve Parliament on the defeat of the Home Rule Bill by the Lords. By doing so he hoped to raise two issues—the question of Home Rule for Ireland, and the still graver question of the rights and privileges of the House of Lords. It is quite impossible even to guess what the result of such an appeal would have been. The country followed Mr. Gladstone more than it cared for Home Rule; it was the Old Man that touched the hearts of the people. Many voters gave him what they called his last chance, and now that he was defeated again they did not care to prolong the struggle. But it is another question how many would have been rallied on the question of the privileges of the House of Lords. No one—not even Lord Salisbury—cares to defend that venerable institution in its entirety. It is an anomaly; but then the British Constitution is full of anomalies. There are those who think, and not without grounds for the assumption, that the Lords immensely strengthened their position in the country by throw-out the Bill. This was clearly not Mr. Gladstone's view. He desired to join issue with them and to fight the question out; but, overruled by his colleagues, the great old warrior surrendered. The policy of the Cabinet was to drop Home Rule for the time being, to await the conversion of the pre-

dominant partner, and meanwhile to push forward with what was called the Newcastle programme. There was much to be said for this view of the situation, but it did not come to anything. The Irish soon became restive. Suspicions began to gain currency in Ireland that they were being sold, and the rift in the majority of forty began to appear. Suddenly Mr. Gladstone appeared on the scene, delivered a memorable speech pointed clearly at the Lords, and—disappeared. Some of those who listened to this remarkable utterance were aware that it was his farewell to the House of Commons, that he would not be seen there again. The close of a wonderful career had come. The finest intellect that had ever been given to any country had that day been withdrawn from its service. Many a day since then the House of Commons has missed him. It has never been quite like the same place to many of us that it was in those golden days.

The English Liberals who thus lost their leader were indeed in evil plight. A worse evil had, however, befallen the Irish group. Mr. Parnell had become involved in proceedings which resulted in a break-up of the wonderful party that had moved with the precision of a battalion on parade. That fatal blunder of Mr. Parnell's cost the Irish party much. It resulted in ten years of fierce strife and all but hopeless confusion at home ; it discouraged and dismayed their friends abroad. Things have been pulled together at last, but even now the men are not quite what they were for the fight. The rise and fall of Mr. Parnell constitutes one of the most extraordinary chapters in Irish history. No one out-

side his own county of Wicklow had heard of the man previous to the election for County Dublin in 1874. True, he bore an honoured name. The Parnells had resisted the Union, and had made sacrifices for their faith; but, until 1874, this strong, silent young Irishman had not been much heard of in public. The Liberals of County Dublin were then spoiling for a fight with Colonel Taylor. Not that they had the slightest chance of wresting that seat from the grasp of the wildest of Tory whips; but they wanted to fight, and Mr. Parnell was fished up. Where he came from nobody knew or cared. No worse candidate ever appeared upon a platform. His speeches were failures; he broke down over and over again, and, of course, he was routed at the polls. I met Mr. Parnell at this famous election, and certainly was not impressed with his powers. Very soon after this failure he was returned for Royal Meath, and then began that wonderful career which astonished the English-speaking race, and left such a deep mark upon Irish history. His first speech in the House—I heard it—was in favour of an amnesty for certain political prisoners. It was like his Dublin addresses—a complete and total failure. It was not that the House failed to listen—it is always indulgent to a new member—Mr. Parnell simply could not get along; and he sat down really without saying anything. What imperfect judges of character men are! Who would—who could have imagined that the pale stammerer of that night's debate was in a year or two to dominate the House of Commons and to dictate terms to the greatest and the proudest of English leaders? Who

could have imagined that the man to whom words came slow and halting would live to be one of the most effective of parliamentary orators, able to say just what he desired to say and no more—the true and rare parliamentary gift? Who could have imagined that this man would live to guide the Irish people through the wilderness, that under his leadership they should even stand on Pisgah and view the Promised Land? It is no part of my purpose to write any sketch of Mr. Parnell's life and labours, but certainly he stands out the most wonderful, the most fascinating of Irish leaders.

The extraordinary fate which befell him, the break with a large section of his party, the heroism of the minority which chivalrously stuck to him, his great fight for supremacy in Ireland, and then his tragic end—where, and in what country, has there been anything like it? And who that witnessed the sad procession which escorted his remains to Glasnevin—a procession that well attested the grief of a nation—can ever forget it? It was felt that a really great man had fallen. Men recalled how he had stepped out from the ranks of his class, how he had toiled and struggled, with what incomparable ability he had fought the Irish battle in Parliament, how he had all but won the goal; and strong men, thinking of it all, wept aloud. His remains rest in one of the sweetest spots in Glasnevin. Around his grave birds warble, and the hum of the city close at hand is hushed. Hard by O'Connell sleeps well, his fitful toil also over. Pilgrims flock to the tomb in their thousands, and friends as well as foes are fain to admit that they stand beside the

grave of a really great man—one of those outstanding characters who make history.

I close this chapter with the expression of a deliberate opinion, often previously expressed, that had Mr. Gladstone been twenty years younger, and Mr. Parnell had not fallen from his high estate, the history of Ireland would have flown in a different channel. An Irish Parliament would now be sitting in Dublin.

CHAPTER VI

THE UNION AND BALFOURIAN AMELIORATION, 1886-1900

MR. GLADSTONE'S surrender or conversion to Home Rule produced a profound impression upon the country. The debates in Parliament, the discussions in the press and on the platform, added to and quickened the public interest. The politicians everywhere were at fever-heat; the armchair species emerged from their retirement; men who had given up politics, or who were utterly careless and apathetic on ordinary occasions, rushed to the polls. "The country in danger," "the dismemberment of the empire," "the desertion and the betrayal of the Irish loyalists"—these were the cries that rang for weeks and months through the country. But although they brought confusion to Mr. Gladstone's main object, although he and his friends were beaten and driven from office, it cannot be denied that the Home Rule Bill had effected a great change in the relations between England and Ireland. Not alone had the greatest of English statesmen adopted Home Rule and made the policy his own, he had been followed in this course by a large majority of the

Liberal party. This was felt everywhere to be a serious thing—a revolution, in fact, in English politics. It is true that Lord Hartington had split the party, and carried with him much that Mr. Gladstone would fain have kept in the way of character, money, influence, and so forth; but still the fact stood, that the Liberal party was now a Home Rule party. What this meant to Mr. Parnell and the Irishmen need not be dwelt upon. They, in turn, and for the time being, became, so far as support to the party was concerned, Irish Liberals. An alliance, offensive and defensive, was formed. Mr. Parnell and his lieutenants appeared upon English platforms. English Radicals journeyed to Ireland, and sometimes took part in proceedings which did them little credit. Altogether it was a serious time; the outlook was not bright for the continuance of the *status quo*. But the influence of the great surrender took other shapes. Lord Hartington, in one of the many able speeches which he then made, recognised to the fullest extent, and with that downrightness which always characterised his utterances, that things could not be in the future quite what they had been in the past. He strongly deprecated the setting up of an Irish Parliament; but he declared with great emphasis that the Imperial Parliament was alike able and willing to redress Irish grievances, to right Irish wrongs—in short, to do whatever ought to be done for Ireland. And it was clear that the extension of the dangerous political landslide which had taken place could only be prevented by vigorous efforts to put things straight in Ireland, and so the Unionist policy for that country

came to be promulgated. It was the compulsion of English opinion over again, only in another form.

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach was the first Irish Chief Secretary under the new regime ; but he was an old hand, and had previously held the office. There was no love lost between the right honourable gentleman and the Irish landlords. He made efforts of a perfectly reasonable and constitutional character to restrain their excesses, was met by a storm of reproach, and in the midst of a battle in which his firmness and good sense would inevitably have triumphed, he broke down in health and disappeared for a considerable time, not only from Dublin Castle, but from Parliament. Mr. Arthur J. Balfour was his successor. His appointment was received by the Irish parliamentary party with a perfect storm of derision. They had wearied out a long succession of Chief Secretaries. Mr. James Lowther, Sir William Hart Dyke, Mr. W. H. Smith, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Mr. Forster, Sir George Trevelyan, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach had all been in harness, had all retired from the thankless office wiser and sadder, if not beaten, men. And now it was to be the turn of Mr. Balfour. The party simply shrieked with delight, and they prepared themselves for what they thought would inevitably be a good time. But just as men were mistaken at first in Mr. Parnell, so the Irishmen erred in regard to Mr. Balfour. They would, indeed, be the first to admit this to-day, Mr. Balfour being one of the few men who have held that office for whom all sections of men in Ireland still have a profound respect and a real regard. The right honourable gentleman

was, of course, a total stranger to the country ; but this apparently is the one thing needful in an Irish Chief Secretary ; it is, indeed, a *sine quâ non*. To know the country and its needs, to appreciate the people, to have shown an interest in their welfare—all these apparent qualifications act only as serious drawbacks for the office from the English standpoint. The Tory party had, however, been cured of sneering at Government by coercion, and Mr. Balfour commenced his work in Ireland determined to deal vigorously with legitimate grievances, but prepared to coerce wrong-doing, if necessary, with the strength of Cromwell. The Plan of Campaign was at this time in its prime ; in many parts of the country it had practically superseded the law of the land. Over a large tract of country the Queen's Writ did not run, so it was clear the new official had his work in front of him. The first decision he arrived at—an absolutely sound and proper decision—was that the law should be observed, and that it should be made supreme over everybody and everything. Reforms might be urgent and pressing ; they must wait until this great object was achieved. Accordingly the Crimes Bill was introduced. It must be admitted that the right honourable gentleman's speech explaining and defending its provisions was the poorest of his parliamentary efforts, and the impression made by this, his first real appearance, was distinctly unfavourable ; but this was abundantly atoned for in Committee on the Bill, where his defence of the fiercely-contested measure was as vigorous and effective as could be desired. The Bill was of the usual character. In the

past, however, all Coercion Acts had been of temporary duration ; they, one and all, expired on a given date. Mr. Balfour's measure was to be perpetual, with clauses providing for the freeing of any part of the country from its operation, and also for its application to any disturbed area by means of the Lord-Lieutenant's proclamation. This was a skilful arrangement. For many years the Act has not been applied to any part of Ireland ; the statute is on the shelf ; but it is ready should occasion arise rendering its application necessary to any area. This has been deemed a grievance by the Irish members ; but when Irish grievances come down to this, they will certainly have reached vanishing point. For many years, as I have said, Ireland has enjoyed the unique distinction of being governed by the ordinary law. Lord Randolph's dream has been realised ; Lord Spencer's fears have been dissipated. And this happy and unusual condition of affairs is due entirely to the working of that policy which destroyed the worst excesses of Irish landlordism.

When the parliamentary battle over the Crimes Bill had ceased, Mr. Balfour applied himself to the consideration of the Land Question. There were at the moment two great outstanding difficulties. The leaseholders had been excluded from the provisions of the Act of 1881. It was not to be expected that 35,000 tenants of this class would tamely submit to permanent disfranchisement. That a tenant on one side of a ditch who held under a yearly agreement should be able to get his rent revised, and a fair rent fixed, whilst a man on the other side should be put out of Court simply because he held under lease, was

an arrangement that could not stand. The other difficulty was also serious. The tenants' advocates maintained that the judicial rents fixed between 1881 and 1885 had been fixed on too high a scale, and their revision was demanded. These were two points full of embarrassment for a Tory, not to say a Landlord Government. A large section of the Tory party would have nothing to say to the revision of any contract governed by a lease; and to touch a rent fixed by the Land Court was an offence approaching to sacrilege. The discussions in the Cabinet at this time must have been interesting to a degree. Lord Salisbury's views are known; so are those of Mr. Goschen. Lord Randolph, who would have cared not a straw for the seals and the wafers of either Land Courts or landlords, had taken his departure; and I suspect the tenants had few friends within the magic and sacred circle. Accordingly a sham Land Bill was introduced; it dodged the leasehold question; it ignored altogether the difficulty connected with the judicial rents. The position was interesting, not to say critical. At this period, however, the Liberal Unionists had not yet ceased to be Liberals. At the instance of the two Ulster Liberals who belonged to the party, Lord Hartington convened a meeting at Devonshire House. The Bill was critically examined, and a Committee of seven appointed to consider and draft amendments. The Committee consisted of Lord Hartington, Mr. Bright, Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Henry James, Lord Lynton, Sir R. Finlay, and myself. These amendments were in due time conveyed to the Government. The leasehold clauses of the Bill were simply wiped

out ; reality was made to take the place of sham. The whole of the leaseholders, whose term did not extend over 99 years, were enfranchised and allowed to enter the Land Court. The judicial rents proved a more difficult matter. The Tory leaders had sworn by all that was sacred they would never give way at this point. It is only needful to say here that they did give way. A provision was inserted in the Bill under which a temporary and an automatic revision of these rents took place by poor-law unions. Upon the question of arrears the Government stood firm. They gave way in the Commons upon town parks ; but the Lords struck out the concession, and the Liberal Unionists, in view of all that had taken place, assented. In three or four years the Rent Redemption Act was passed, which enacted that in the case of all leaseholders whose term exceeded 99 years, or who held under perpetuity and fee-farm grants, the tenant should have the right to buy out the lessor's interest ; and in the event of the lessor refusing to sell, the lessee was empowered to enter the Land Court and have a fair rent fixed. This Bill—a Government measure by the way—wholly escaped Lord Salisbury's notice. He publicly declared in his place in the House of Lords that had he known of it nothing would have induced him to sanction it. The long leaseholders, therefore, had a narrow escape ; but a miss is as good as a mile, and the whole of the leaseholders, 35,000 in number, reached the Promised Land in safety. It is only necessary to say here in regard to the judicial rents, that when Mr. Morley's Committee sat in 1894 every official witness admitted that the contention of the

tenants' advocates upon the point was correct, that the rents for the first four years had been fixed too high, *i.e.* that the Commissioners had not sufficiently taken into account the permanence of the fall in prices. So ended the struggle in 1887. The authors of the Plan of Campaign had garnered their legislative harvest ; once more Parliament had proved the utility of agitation ; once more the Irish people had been taught that to secure any great object illegal action was the surest, the swiftest road to success.

In a short time Parliament was otherwise occupied. The Local Government Act for England and Wales passed in 1888, and there followed what can only be called the greatest blunder committed by any political party within the century. I refer to the setting up of what came to be known as the Parnell Commission. The *Times*, as is well known, had attacked Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule proposals, not alone savagely and persistently, but with extraordinary power and ability. It is not, indeed, too much to say that this great organ of English opinion destroyed these proposals in the minds of a large and a most important section of the community ; but in a fatal moment it allowed itself to embark upon a policy which culminated in absolute disaster. It attacked the Irish leaders, and especially Mr. Parnell, with singular ferocity. Suddenly a *facsimile* letter was published purporting to be signed by Mr. Parnell. This letter expressed regret at the death of Lord Frederick Cavendish, but declared that Mr. Burke had got his deserts on that memorable afternoon in the Phœnix Park. The effect of the publication was instantaneous and tremendous.

Here, at last, the Irish leader was convicted under his own hand and seal! Now the conspiracy was blown upon and burst! No English leader, no English party, could have further dealings with this man or with his followers. It was a trying time for Mr. Parnell and the Irish. What would this remarkable man do? This was the question which came to every lip. Mr. Parnell promptly repudiated the letter and denied the authorship. Further letters of the same character appeared, and soon Parnellism and Crime became the theme on every Unionist platform. Before long I was made aware of the basis upon which this whole campaign rested. The letters, as was afterwards proved, were handed to the *Times* by Mr. Edward Caulfield Houston, who then acted as Secretary to the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union. I was at the time on the Council of that organisation. I knew Mr. Houston, and I can assert with perfect confidence that no one on the Council knew aught of the transactions in which he was involved. I remember one afternoon accompanying Mr. Houston to his rooms at the Hotel Metropole. On the dressing-table lay a loaded revolver. "What do you keep that thing for?" I asked. Then I got the whole story. The moment I heard Pigott's name I fairly gasped. "Pigott!" I said. "Good heavens! you are not relying upon that man? You are not risking the cause of the Union upon the evidence of such an outcast?" Mr. Houston was, however, certain of his ground; he had applied every test. I felt sure all was lost, honour included. From that moment I ceased to have any real interest in the matter. The Parnell

Commission was appointed. The weeks followed each other steadily and drearily. The horrors of the Land League period, the ghastly cruelties perpetrated under the Plan of Campaign, were served up afresh. God only knows how many volumes they fill. I never could feel any interest in the proceedings; I had lived through it all; to me the stories were simply horrid memories. And I knew that everything in the Court was working up and on to the grand finale—the awful catastrophe. I did, I confess, feel stirred by the appearance of Major Le Carron. His strutting across the stage was, indeed, a piece of the highest art. That this most accomplished agent of the British Government should have sat for years in the inmost councils of the enemies of the British Empire, should have walked the corridors of the Palace at Westminster with Mr. Parnell, should have received the assurance of Mr. Patrick Egan's distinguished consideration, should, in fact, have deceived the very elect, and finally turned up in a British Court to give away the whole show—this was, as I have said, art of the highest order. Apart from this incident I simply waited for Pigott. I had not been a citizen of Dublin for twenty-five years without knowing Pigott. The moment I learned from Mr. Houston that his case rested upon this abandoned character, I knew all was lost. And Pigott at last stepped into the box. His appearance on that occasion will never be forgotten; it will live in the memory of every man who was present and in the annals of our time. What was it not worth to see Sir Charles Russell playing with this ruffian; it ought to have been the subject of a

great historical picture. Mr. Pigott's memory failed, of course, at inconvenient points ; but bit by bit he was made to pull himself together, the tale of forgery was dragged out, and the whole edifice against Mr. Parnell, so far as the letters were concerned, collapsed and lay in ruins. What mattered all that followed ? The *Times* was beaten and, in a sense, disgraced. The Unionist cause, in so far as it had allowed itself to be identified with the case for the *Times*, received a damaging blow. In meetings for many a day afterwards the cry of "Pigott" answered every argument. The finding of the Court on the letters was decisive. Mr. Parnell was unequivocally cleared. Nothing else really signified. The Liberal party rose to its feet to welcome the Irish leader when he appeared in the House of Commons. Old Tories even congratulated him. Party feeling had not been able to obscure all gentlemanly instincts. And so ended this singular and memorable chapter of Anglo-Irish history.

Ere the session of 1888 closed a second grant of £5,000,000 sterling was made to continue the Land Purchase experiment, and until 1891 Ireland enjoyed a rare interval of quiet and repose. Mr. Balfour meanwhile visited the West and North-West, and saw for himself the miserable conditions under which the great mass of the people lived. These sad conditions have never been quite recognised in Great Britain. The fact that there were tens of thousands of our fellow-subjects shut up in hopeless despair—with no outlet, with no outlook—to whom death and the grave must have been a welcome release, has never quite been taken seriously by the people of England ;

and yet there stand the stern facts. A great part of the crowded population of the western seaboard live subject to the most shocking conditions. The land is in many places hardly worth cultivating. The riches of the sea are not for these poor people ; they have no boats, no capital. The skill of the fisherman has ceased to be developed ; and even were the fish caught, the market does not exist, *i.e.* there are no means of transit thereto. Struggling for a wretched existence upon these arid patches of soil, growing potatoes and little else, feeding a pig, and rearing a scarecrow of a calf—this is the method by which thousands of human beings drag out a miserable existence. No one outside the area seemed to care. One noble Englishman—Mr. James Hack Tuke—did try to arouse the sluggish English mind. Nobly he toiled and laboured in spite of difficulties, in spite of discouragements. Unable to do all that his great soul realised as necessary, he did what English philanthropy enabled him to do—he aided emigration, and he subsidised, to a limited extent, the fishing industry. Mr. Balfour, when he went and realised the facts for the first time, was deeply moved ; but it was not quite easy to determine upon the remedies. One thing, however, was clear—the country ought to be opened up. Nothing was possible whilst these districts were isolated and shut off from contact with the outer world. A free grant of a million and a half pounds sterling for railways was the first-fruits of Mr. Balfour's visit. The railways were mainly constructed by means of this free grant, and they were constructed under a stipulation that they should be worked by the main

trunk lines of the country. These new lines are all running to-day. What they have meant to Donegal and the other counties which they traverse need not be described. They were the first, if not the best, fruits of Mr. Balfour's visit to the congested districts.

But Mr. Balfour did not rest with this great effort. He pondered over what he had seen ; the condition of the people distressed and haunted him. The great Land Purchase Act of 1891, with its provisions founding the Congested Districts Board, followed. I rank this measure as the greatest of Mr. Balfour's achievements. He may—I hope he will—live and continue to serve his country for many years to come ; he will never do a finer piece of work, so full of promise and of actual fulfilment of good, as it was his lot to bring to a successful conclusion in that year. Convinced that in purchase lay the real settlement of the Land Question, convinced that the experiment made under the Ashbourne Acts was conclusive, and warranted the final adoption of the principle, he proposed that Imperial credit to the extent of £33,000,000 should be placed at the disposal of the Irish tenants to enable them to become owners of their holdings. It was a great, a bold, a wise and statesmanlike proposal. Parliament accepted it. The Act of 1891 is now the sheet-anchor of all Land Purchase work in Ireland. But along with these great proposals the Bill established what was called the Congested Districts Board. This Board consisted of a body of gentlemen nominated by the Lord-Lieutenant. It was charged with the duty of purchasing land under the Purchase Acts for the

purpose of enlarging and consolidating farms, of improving the breed of horses, cattle, and poultry, aiding the fishing industry by erecting piers and boat-slips, by the supply of boats and fish-curing stations, and of developing agriculture and other industries. A sum of money, the income from a grant out of the Church Fund, *plus* State aid, enables them to carry out this beneficent work. Already it has told largely and beneficially upon these wild, weird regions. Donegal especially shows the improvement. The railways, the advance in the woollen industry, the extension of cottage work, such as knitting and lacemaking, the development of the shirt industry, and, latest of all, the manufacture of carpets—those systematic and persistent efforts have had an immense effect. The lot of the people is brighter; the conditions of life have distinctly improved. There is no portion of these wild but beautiful regions where the peasant's face does not light up at the mention of Mr. Balfour's name.

I now reach the last stage of the Unionist policy. In the year 1894, and just as the first statutory period under the Land Act of 1881 was about to expire, Mr. Morley's Committee sat for the purpose of inquiring into the working of that famous measure. Charges of maladministration under the Act had been freely made. It was well known that much of the good Parliament had intended for the tenant had been undone by judicial decision; and, in any case, it was felt that before the second statutory term was entered upon, inquiry ought to be made. The Committee examined only official witnesses: a single landlord and a valuer for the landlords were

indeed heard ere the proceedings closed, but no tenant was examined. When the Report came up for consideration, the Chairman's draft, as against one brought up by Mr. Brodrick, was adopted. The landlord party then retired in a body, and Mr. Morley's Report was finally amended and adopted. To say that the case against the administration of the Acts was proved is to say little; it was a revelation to have set out clearly the result of the proceedings in the Courts of Law. Mr. Morley and his Government left office in 1895, and although a Bill founded upon the Report was read a second time without a division, it perished with the dissolution of Parliament.

And now with the advent of the Parliament of 1895 began what I call the revolutionary period of the Unionist policy. Mr. Gerald Balfour became Chief Secretary. A Land Bill after the Morley Report was a necessity, and, accordingly, the Bill of 1896 was introduced. The Irish landlords were simply furious: this was not what they had bargained for at all. They had subscribed huge sums of money to the Irish Unionist Alliance; the Alliance had, in turn, sent over crowds of Unionist orators and workers to the English elections; these gentlemen quietly assumed that they had won the General Election — and here was another and a drastic Land Bill as their reward! The Irish landlord does not count for much in the House of Commons where a Land Bill is concerned. In that Assembly the Ulster tenants have something to say, and it was impossible for effective opposition to be carried out to Mr. Gerald Balfour's Bill in that

branch of the Legislature. In the House of Lords it was altogether different. There landlordism is in the ascendant and supreme. The English landlords made common cause with their Irish brethren; the Government whip failed to bring up the ordinary supporters of the Government; the Irish peers rallied to the defence of their own interests in great force. It was a near thing once or twice; but the Bill scraped through and passed. When it came back to the Commons the landlords made a despairing effort to secure the Government's assent to amendments that would have wrecked the Bill; but these efforts were frustrated, and the Act of 1896 took its place on the Statute Book—the only measure of Land Tenure Reform within the century which cannot be said to have been won by illegal agitation.

In 1898 a still greater fight was waged with the landlords. In 1886, as I have pointed out, Lord Randolph Churchill had pledged the then Government to Irish Local Government. The measure was to be similar to and simultaneous with that for England. During the fight in the country against Home Rule every responsible speaker on the Unionist side had endorsed this policy, had declared that whilst the break-up of Parliament was not to be thought of, the two countries should and must be governed locally on the same principle. All this did not signify much to the Irish landlords; their friends were now in office. Promises were like pie-crust, made to be broken; and it never entered into the minds of these gentlemen that the Unionist party would redeem the promises solemnly made. Great

was their wrath, therefore, when in 1898 the Local Government Bill was introduced. It was a real, not a sham measure; it was thoroughgoing in every clause; it disestablished the Grand Jury as the county authority, and set up the County Council in its stead. It provided for District, Urban, and Rural Councils, and, generally speaking, followed the English and Scottish lines. It was a veritable revolution; it handed over the local government of the country to the people; in twenty-seven counties it ensured the supremacy of the Irish Nationalists. This was indeed a backing of their friends! But when the landlords found that they had to make a virtue of what was a necessity, that upon this question Mr. Chamberlain was supreme, and that Lord Salisbury could not be relied upon to oppose what he had once declared would be a greater evil than an Irish Parliament—when all this was discovered, the Irish landlords determined to die hard. They set up a cry that under the new order of things they might be rated out of existence and robbed. The Government listened, and the landlords' share of the poor rate was made a charge on Imperial resources. This amounted to an annual grant of £350,000 per annum, or to a sum capitalised at twenty years' purchase of £7,000,000—not a bad solatium. But most people thought the Act was well worth the price paid in hard cash for it.

There followed next the Act which established and set up the Department of Agriculture and Industries—the Act which brought Mr. Horace Plunkett into official life. Personally I have never taken the sanguine view of this measure that many thoughtful

people in the country have done, but I readily concede this much—that if anything is to be achieved, Mr. Plunkett is the man to do it. His devotion to the cause of agricultural development, his services to, and sacrifices for the people, are part of the history of the country. And for his sake, as well as for the sake of the country, one can sincerely hope that the Act will accomplish all and even more than he desires. Thus ended the great chapter of Balfourian Amelioration. To recapitulate, as I have done in regard to other periods, the country secured—

- (a) The Crimes Act.
- (b) The Land Act of 1887.
- (c) The Second Ashbourne Act.
- (d) The Land Purchase Act of 1891, including the Railway Grant and the Provisions for the Congested Districts.
- (e) The Land Act of 1896.
- (f) The Local Government Act.
- (g) The Act creating the Department of Agriculture and Industries.

It is again a splendid record, and one which completely justifies the existence of the Unionist party. Thirty years have passed since the great awakening. No one can say that these have been years either of neglect or of wrong-doing. In the main these years have been full of well-doing marked by a real desire to serve the country; and the harvest has been, and is now being, reaped. For many years Ireland has enjoyed profound peace; illegal methods have been at a discount; law and order have reigned supreme. It has been said that during these years the Irish party has been rent in twain by strife and

faction ; that men were too much occupied quarrelling amongst themselves to devote any attention to the common enemy. How far this may be true I do not care to say ; but it is impossible to doubt the healing effect of the great policy which has been carried out. It is on the Land Question the real peace of the country depends. If the policy carried out on the land had wholly failed to produce a better feeling, I should despair of Ireland. It has not wholly failed. Had it not been carried out, the country would have been ruined. Making every allowance for the shortcomings of legislation, allowing for maladministration by officials, and for the unfortunate interpretation placed upon certain sections of the statutes by the Courts, the results are clear and manifest. The United Irish League is a very different organisation to the Land League ; its methods are not so appalling as those of the Plan of Campaign. It would be impossible now to get large numbers of men to give up their farms and go out on the roadside. All that kind of thing is over and done with for ever. The people would not rise to it ; their leaders would not stoop to ask the sacrifice. No ; the Land Acts have told upon the peace of the country, and the Irish members are strong enough to secure by constitutional means all that is required to make the code complete and effective.

Peace and order reign supreme ; the country is practically crimeless ; agrarian outrage has ceased ; but although quiet prevails, let no mistake be made. In other chapters of this volume I propose to explain the position of the three great questions which must

be settled in the near future—the land must pass to the occupiers on honest and fair terms, the education controversy must be settled, and there must be some decision arrived at as to the financial relations between the two countries.

In the settlement of these, the three remaining issues, outside the question of the Union itself, little or no help can be expected from the leaders of the Irish Unionist party. Reform has gone much too far already for their taste. Furious at the action of the Government in the Parliament of 1895, they secured the loss of two seats and gravely imperilled a third at the election of 1900. Their action so impressed the Prime Minister that the Irish Secretary, who had been responsible for the reforms, was recalled and placed at the Board of Trade, a greatly inferior position. And since that day Ireland and Irish affairs have ceased to occupy the attention of Cabinet Ministers. The landlords have had their way for the time being. Mr. Wyndham's main duty as the new Irish Secretary is to admit grievances and to decline any remedy. He represents the haughty Levite who is quite aware of the presence of the sufferer, but like his prototype he passes coldly by on the other side.

There have been such periods in Irish history before. Such a time arose after Mr. Gladstone's efforts in 1869-73. The English Government and the English people thought they had done enough—thought they had settled the Irish difficulty; they rested and were thankful. The Land League arose to destroy their peace of mind, and Mr. Gladstone did in 1881 what he scouted in 1870. And yet

the legal position of the Irish tenant was better in 1881 than it had been in 1870. It required two bad seasons, it required want and famine and suffering, it required murder and outrage, the gallows and the convict prison, to wake up the statesmen and people of England. They were aroused at last ; and, when aroused, Mr. Gladstone acted with decision, and, as I have already admitted, to some purpose.

Now three things are perfectly certain to-day. The Land Question cannot rest where it is. English statesmen know and feel this ; they deliberately started the great policy of Land Purchase. Under this policy they have already conferred enormous benefits upon 62,000 tenants who have purchased the fee-simple of their holdings. This class of selected tenants are the envy of their neighbours whose landlords refuse to sell. They pay 25 or 30 per cent less by way of terminable annuity than their neighbours pay as judicial rent ; they will own the land, free of all charge, in forty-nine years. Discontent is rising all over the land—nobody can feel surprised at it ; it will require sooner or later to be met. If it is not speedily met, then fresh trouble lies straight ahead.

Again, the Education Controversy must somehow be brought to a close. It is intolerable that because of religious and conscientious convictions the Catholic youth of Ireland should still be denied the priceless privilege of Higher Education. Thirty years ago Mr. Gladstone admitted the grievance ; so did Lord Hartington and the Liberal party of the day. Evil influences prevented a settlement. The grievance

is still intact, and the country suffers. Mr. Balfour speaks out bravely as an individual ; Lord Cadogan hisses the truth into the ears of an angry Belfast audience—but all to no purpose. A Government with a majority of 130 will do nothing, and relegates the question to a Royal Commission. This question must be settled. If the Parliament of the United Kingdom is the body Lord Hartington described it to be in 1886—a body able and willing to do everything for Ireland that ought to be done—the sooner it proves its capacity by grappling with this difficulty, the sooner it will remove a reproach from the name of England and confer a great boon upon Ireland.

Finally, it is absolutely necessary that some understanding should be arrived at in regard to the financial relations between the two countries. A Royal Commission has reported that these relations are not fair toward the poorer country. It is no answer for the Government—for any Government—to say that the Commissioners went wrong, that the Commission itself was not quite impartial. It is no good for the predominant partner to plead “not guilty.” The decision of a competent Court has been given against England ; that decision stands until it is reversed. By all means let there be an appeal ; establish a new and a better tribunal ; let the case be threshed out ; but, until this is done, the decision of the Court stands against England, and the Irish grievance is established. I take no high ground here ; let the truth be established. But these three questions remain to be dealt with. The Unionist party is singularly well qualified and

perfectly equipped for dealing with them, and there cannot, and ought not, to be content in Ireland whilst they remain unsettled. Until they are disposed of the Unionist policy for Ireland is incomplete.

CHAPTER VII

I. THE LAND QUESTION—TENURE— THE CASE STATED

THE population of Ireland, according to the census returns, now stands at 4,456,546. There are 586,717 agricultural holdings in the country, and, after making due allowance for double ownership and occupancy, it is well within the mark to say that some 3,500,000 of the people are directly and indirectly dependent upon the land for their daily bread. This single fact stamps the Land Question as the great central—the most vital—issue in Irish politics. Other questions are important; this involves the very existence of the people; around and upon it everything hinges. A single bad season, with its attendant result of famine and want, deranges a great part of the ordinary business of the country. Trade in the towns languishes, and debts to traders are run up; discontent spreads on every hand; agitation follows; and the results which I have endeavoured to make clear in other chapters of this volume inevitably arise.

It now becomes my duty to trace, in some detail, the history of this grave and all-important

question, and to place before the reader the merits of what I conceive to be the real and dominant factor in Irish politics. In doing so I shall be forced to levy contributions from authorities whose knowledge cannot be called in question, and whose bias has not always been in favour of the tenant or his cause. It has been my desire to keep this narrative of fact, as far as possible, within the Union period, but in regard to the Land Question it becomes absolutely necessary, if a proper understanding is to be arrived at, to travel farther afield; and I begin what may be called the history of the question with an extract from the *Report of the Devon Commission*. This Commission, appointed in 1843, reported in 1845. It had for its chairman the Earl of Devon, a great Irish landowner. It travelled throughout the whole of Ireland, and heard evidence, without stint, from all classes of the people. The old relationship of the people to the land is nowhere alluded to or explained in the Report—a curious omission. Suffice it to say here that, previous to the great confiscations, the relation of landlord and tenant, as it is now understood, did not exist. The old Irish land system was founded on the tribal basis, *i.e.* the people paid tribute to the chieftain. They were, in fact, even then a sort of co-owners—a fact of very great importance in view of present-day demands. Here is how the great change was accomplished, and as it is described by Lord Devon and his colleagues. At pages 6 and 7 of their elaborate report the Commissioners say:—

In the civil contentions which at various periods, and during many centuries, disturbed the repose of England and

Scotland, property gradually passed from the feudal tenure of former times to the more civilised relation of landlord and tenant, as known to our present law. It is for us briefly to show how different has been the case in Ireland. Without entering at any length into the history of the past, we cannot avoid noticing a few prominent matters which exercised a material influence in producing the existing relation of landlord and tenant. We allude to the confiscations and colonisations of Elizabeth and James, the wars of Cromwell, and lastly the Penal Code. The first of these led, in many instances, to the possession of large tracts by individuals whose more extensive estates in England made them regardless and neglectful of their properties in Ireland. Again, the confiscation of the lands of O'Neill in the North and of Desmond in the South were followed by the plantations of Ulster and Munster. The extensive settlement of Scotch and English in the counties of Ulster has introduced habits and customs which give a different character to that province from other parts of the island. Hence also is supposed to have arisen the system of tenant right, which, as forming a singular feature in the relation of landlord and tenant, we shall have occasion afterwards to notice. In Munster the plantation was more imperfectly carried out, and a class of undertakers, unaccompanied by those followers whom they were equally bound by the terms of their grant to introduce, became the landlords of the native peasantry in many parts of those districts, producing, for that reason, comparatively little change. The adventurers who obtained debentures from Cromwell formed, for the most part, a small proprietary; and, being generally resident, exercised an influence on the relations of society, different from that produced by the large and absent grantees of former reigns. These confiscations were followed at a later date by the enactment of the penal laws, which, affecting as they did the position of Roman Catholics as regarded landed property, must have had a very general influence on society in such a country as Ireland. These laws, both in their enactment and in their subsequent

relaxations, have materially affected the position of occupier and proprietor. They interfered with almost every mode of dealing with landed property by those who professed that religion, and, by creating a feeling of insecurity, directly checked their industry. The Protestant landlords also suffered indirectly from the operation of the same laws; for, in letting their estates, they were, to a great degree, confined in the selection of their tenants to those who alone could enjoy any permanent tenure under them, and were exclusively entitled to the elective franchise. Many landlords, therefore, parted with the whole or a great portion of their property for long terms, and thus avoided all immediate contact with the inferior occupiers, so that all the duties of a landlord were left for performance to a middleman. The latter, on the other hand, in the favourable position in which the laws had indirectly placed him as regarded the proprietor, dictated very frequently his own terms to the landlord, and restrictive covenants against subletting or subdividing were seldom inserted.

As to the opinion of the Commission regarding this system, the Commissioners say at page 15 :—

It was formerly the practice with most landlords, particularly those who were absentees, to grant long leases of a large tract to some individual who was answerable for the rent, and who undertook the responsibility of dividing and underletting the land. These lessees were usually designated "middlemen." This was generally done so as to ensure a large profit, and the poor occupiers were frequently exposed to great oppression. The practice of letting land to middlemen is now rare, but the system has entailed upon the country the most injurious consequences.

Before leaving this matter it may be pointed out that the worst has not been said in regard to it. Before the Morley Committee in 1894 evidence was given to show that between the actual tiller of the soil and the head landlord of a certain property in Ulster,

where the rent was reduced by 60 per cent, three middlemen intervened. The occupying tenant was thus expected to produce rent for four different owners, and this case was said to be a not uncommon type.

Before taking leave of what may be called the ancient history of the question it will be advisable to explain here what is known as the "Ulster Custom." A section of Ulster landlords are, at the present time, working almost unceasingly to destroy this, the great protection of the Ulster tenant. The case they attempt to make is very simple, but has no foundation in history. They do not contest the fact that the original settlers found the province in practically the condition of waste land — this is admitted. They do not question the equally plain fact that the settlers reclaimed the land, built their own houses, and made the province what it is to-day—all this is admitted. What is asserted is that all this work was done on long and improving leases, and at low, if not merely nominal, rents ; therefore it is argued when these leases expired all this property created by the tenant reverted to the landlord, who had not alone a moral but a legal right to raise the rents, and otherwise deal with his estate as he thought fit. Those who are curious to see the landlords' contention stated in full may read with interest, if not with profit, the statement handed in by Mr. Hugh Montgomery and printed in the appendices to the *Fry Commission Report* (1897). But leaving this pleasant fiction—for pure fiction it undoubtedly is—aside, I again return to the *Report of the Devon Commission*. At pages 14 and 15 the origin and working of the Ulster Custom is dealt with thus :—

In the account given by witnesses throughout Ireland of the mode in which occupiers held their land, the most striking peculiarity is the custom prevalent in the northern counties called "tenant right." The origin of this custom has been the subject of much speculation, but is now rather a matter of curiosity than of present interest. [This may have been true in 1845; it is the reverse of the truth in 1901.] It dates from a very early period, having probably sprung up, as we have already noticed, as a natural consequence from the manner in which property was generally granted and dealt with in that part of the country. Large tracts having become the property of public bodies, or of individuals resident at a distance, the landlords were well contented to let their farms to those who would undertake the cultivation and entire management, reserving to themselves a rent, but making no expenditure, and exercising little interference with the land. Under such circumstances it seems neither extraordinary nor unreasonable that a tenant quitting a farm, either at his own desire, or from any difference with his landlord, should obtain from his successor a sum of money, partly in remuneration of his expenditure, and partly as a price paid for the possession of land which the new tenant would have no other means of acquiring. From this state of things a feeling of proprietorship appears to have grown up in the tenant, which continues in a great degree to the present day. Under the influence of this custom the tenant claims, and generally exercises, a right to dispose of his holding for a valuable consideration, although he may himself be a tenant at will, and although he may have expended nothing on permanent improvements. Proprietors, generally, have been enabled to place a restriction upon this tenant right, so far at least as to secure a power of selection with respect to the tenant, and to place some limit upon the amount to be paid, wisely judging that a tenant who pays a large sum of money (part of which he probably borrows) on entering upon a farm will be crippled in his means for the proper management of it. Anomalous as this custom is, if considered with reference to all ordinary

notions of property, it must be admitted that the district in which it prevails has thriven and improved in comparison with other parts of the country ; and although we can foresee some danger to the just rights of property from the unlimited allowance of this “tenant right,” yet we are sure that evils more immediate and of still greater magnitude would result from any hasty or general disallowance of it, and still less can we recommend any interference with it by law.

This is a most admirable and clear account of the origin of the various usages under the Ulster Custom, and, as will be seen, it lends no countenance to the contention of those landlords who are engaged at the present time in setting the Ulster people by the ears, and preparing the way for still more drastic legislation. The origin of the Custom being clear, it is important to see how it has worked out. It arose, as we have seen, out of the fact that the undertakers who acquired grants of the forfeited lands were either unable or unwilling to spend the money necessary for their proper cultivation. This came to be supplied by those who, under the terms of the several grants, had to be planted on the land. And the expenditure having taken place—the houses being built, the lands drained and fenced, out of the tenants’ capital and labour—a property equitably and naturally grew out of the transaction.

What the Custom means to-day on any well-managed estate subject to it was most concisely and admirably stated by Mr. Blake, Chairman of County Fermanagh, in the case of *Graham v. Earl of Erne*.¹ The learned gentleman laid down the attributes attaching to the Custom thus :—

¹ *Donnell's Reports*, p. 405.

1. The right or custom, in general, of yearly tenants, or those deriving through them, to continue in undisturbed possession so long as they act properly as tenants and pay their rents.

2. The correlative right of the landlord periodically to raise the rent, so as to give him a just, fair, and full participation in the increased value of the land ; but not so as to extinguish the tenant's interest by imposing a rack-rent.

3. The usage or custom of the yearly tenants to sell their interest, if they do not wish to continue in possession, or if they become unable to pay the rent.

4. The correlative right of the landlord to be consulted, and to exercise a potential voice in the approval or disapproval of the proposed assignee.

5. The liability of the landlord, if taking land for his own purposes from a tenant, to pay the tenant the fair value of the tenant right.

A still greater authority—the present Master of the Rolls (in the case of *M'Elroy v. Brooke*, 16 *Law Reports, Ireland*)—used the following clear and definite language: “The essentials of the Custom,” he said, “are the right to sell, to have the incoming tenant, if there be no reasonable objection to him, recognised by the landlord, and to have a sum of money paid for the interest, and the tenancy transferred.” The right of sale is here plainly asserted. When Mr. Gladstone came to deal with the Custom in the Land Act of 1870 he made no secret of its difficulties. In all probability the right honourable gentleman, and most of his colleagues, had never heard of such a custom, and the fact of its existence must have jarred upon their general ideas as to the rights of property. The nearest approach to the Ulster Custom was to be found in the Custom of the Manor in regard to copyhold lands in England ;

and, as we learn from *Hansard*, the Cabinet of that time commenced by attempting a legal definition. This attempt had to be abandoned, for, speaking on March 28, 1870, Mr. Gladstone said :—

Without aiming at scientific precision, they (the Cabinet) had tried repeatedly to define the Custom, but their failure was signal, and they got so much out of conceit with their own efforts that they themselves proposed to strike out the words which they at first adopted.

The Act of 1870, which legalised the Custom, began by enacting that "The usages prevalent in the province of Ulster, which are known as, and in this Act intended to be included under, the denomination of the Ulster Tenant Right Custom, are hereby declared to be legal, and shall in the case of any holding in the province of Ulster, proved to be subject thereto, be enforced in the manner provided by this Act." Mr. Gladstone had not in 1870 what he had in 1881, the assistance and aid of a great Ulster man in framing and carrying his measure ;¹ and hence the difficulties which afterwards arose. The word "usages" in the section quoted was not in the Bill as it left the Commons ; it was inserted in the Lords. As the Bill went to the Lords the second word of the section was "usage," and the change effected at once legalised all those office rules which were mainly devised in breach of the Custom ; and the method of enforcing the Custom upon a landlord who chose to object to the incoming tenant was left so defective as to be practically worthless to-day. In all such cases the selling tenant was simply driven back upon Section 16 of the Act. Under this Section

¹ Mr. Hugh Law, afterwards Lord Chancellor of Ireland.

he was entitled to limited and uncertain compensation as a tenant quitting his holding.

Clearly the Act ought to have put the *onus* upon the landlord who refused to recognise the rights of the tenant. The sale ought simply to have been legalised, subject to the landlord justifying his refusal to accept the incoming tenant upon reasonable grounds. The absence of a just and simple provision of this character has gone far to destroy in many districts the right of sale under the Custom.¹ The intention of the Legislature was good ; it could not have been better stated than it was by Baron Dowse in the case of *Stevenson v. Earl of Leitrim*. The learned judge, in deciding this test case, is thus reported :—

All we have to do is to find out by evidence the tenant right custom attached to the holding. When the inquiry is closed, if the Custom is proved, the statute makes the Custom legal, whether it is consistent or inconsistent with the tenure, regardless of whether it possesses the incidents required by the common law as a condition to a custom being recognised as legally binding. This is the great change introduced by the Irish Land Act.

At the present time, as I have indicated, the most strenuous efforts are being made to destroy this invaluable historic right of the Ulster Custom tenant. The methods adopted by unscrupulous landlords and agents are varied and diverse. On one estate, in County Armagh, evidence was given before Mr. Justice Andrews, in the case of *Ballantine v. Lord Gosford* (June 1901), that the practice for sixteen years had been to consider the Custom as

¹ See *Report of Bessborough Commission*, 1880, p. 7.

non-existent in all cases where the tenant had got a fair rent fixed under the Land Act of 1881. The learned judge declared that there was not a particle of law for such a contention. Again, in selling the tenant's interest in a farm, solicitors and auctioneers have been in the habit, even on estates admittedly subject to the Custom, to sell under the Act of 1881. They have done so because of the difficulty attendant upon securing the consent of the landlord to the transfer of tenancy. They, therefore, have preferred to sell under the Act of 1881, Section 1. But under the Act of 1881 the landlord has rights which he does not possess under the Custom. He has, for example, the right of pre-emption. This right was, until recent years, rarely exercised; to-day its exercise is the rule and not the exception in Ulster. An Ulster Custom tenant selling under the Act of 1881 thus parts with the very essence of the Custom; the moment notice of sale is served under the Act of 1881 the landlord's right of pre-emption arises. No such right exists under the Custom; this much is settled law. When the landlord announces his intention to buy, what is called the "true value" of the tenant's interest is fixed by the Land Commission. This "true value" is invariably one-third less than the market value; accordingly the landlord buys at the "true value," and may sell next day in the open market, and at the market value. Under a right given for a wholly different purpose he, in fact, carries on a traffic in farms, and puts into his pocket part of the tenant's interest; and needless to say the new tenant loses all his rights under the Land Act, he being

generally converted into a "future tenant." Again, there are estates where sale is freely allowed, but where the new tenant is forced to pay an additional rent as the price of the landlord's consent to the transfer. In short, the whole strength of landlordism of this type is being employed to force the tenant to sell under the Act of 1881, and thus to abrogate the Custom. Giving evidence before the Devon Commission, the late Mr. John Hancock, agent to Lord Lurgan, referring to County Armagh, said: "It is one of the sacred rights of the country which cannot be touched with impunity; and if systematic efforts were made amongst the proprietors of Ulster to invade tenant right, I do not believe there is force at the disposal of the Horse Guards to keep the peace of the province." That which Mr. Hancock deprecated has now come about. There are systematic efforts all over Ulster to destroy the Custom. The answer of Ulster is to be found not in an appeal to the Horse Guards, but in the demand for the compulsory sale of the landlord's interest in the soil. His expropriation is the living issue in Ulster politics.

Having explained how the present system of land tenure was introduced—it was, in fact, the English system *minus* its conditions, the tenant in Ireland doing, by way of expenditure, what the landlord did in England—and having endeavoured to make clear the origin and working of the Custom which differentiated the province of Ulster from the rest of Ireland, I am now free to examine the Land Question within the Union period. It has already been shown that whilst the great war went on, and high

prices ruled, the subdivision of land increased to an abnormal extent. The creation of the forty-shilling freeholder intensified the evil, the people clamouring for land, the land-owners being desirous of controlling votes. Dealing with this question, the Select Committee of 1830 describes the advancement of agriculture during the war, the consequent demand for labour and augmentation of the population, the increased value of land, and so the temptation to subletting. After alluding to the wretched condition to which the subdivision of land and an over-population had reduced the people, the Report proceeds: "Such was the state of things so soon as a fall in prices occurred after the peace. A change then began to take place in the system of managing lands. The great decline of agricultural produce prevented many of the middlemen as well as the occupiers from paying their rents; an anxiety began to be felt by the proprietors to improve the value of their estates, and a general impression was produced in the minds of all persons that a pauper population spread over the country would go on increasing, and the value of the land at the same time diminishing, till the produce would become insufficient to maintain the resident population." Outside of Ulster the occupiers of land were mainly tenants at will. As clay in the potter's hand they were at the mercy of the landlord and of the middleman; and the clearances already described prove how the rights of property were exercised. Nor was Parliament at all disposed to intervene. Apparently the Legislature had made up its mind that the evil must be allowed to cure itself, and, shutting its

eyes close and hard down, things were allowed to drift and take their course. Early in the century Mr. Brownlow tried to get the consent of the House of Commons to a Bill mitigating some of the harshness of the land law. Between 1835 and 1843 Mr. Sharman Crawford introduced three separate Bills. The Bill of 1835 bore, in addition to the name of the mover, those of Sir Denham Norreys and Mr. John Bodkin; in the Bill of 1836 the name of Mr. Sheil was bracketed with that of the mover; and for that of 1843 Mr. Sharman Crawford and Mr. M'Cance stood sponsors. What did these several measures seek to do? The preamble of the Bill of 1836 is worth placing upon record. It reads as follows :—

Whereas it is expedient to encourage the improvement of the lands in Ireland by the occupying tenants, and to promote the building of a better description of houses for the use of the farmers and peasantry and other inhabitants of that country; and to make provision for the better regulation of the interests of landlords and tenantry as respects the letting and holding of land in Ireland :

And whereas it has long been the general practice in Ireland that all buildings have been erected and kept in repair, and all improvements have been made by the tenant and at his cost :

And whereas the power of the landlord in recovering rent and in evicting tenants from their holdings, and enforcing claims of every description by means of distress and ejectment, have been strengthened and extended by various Acts passed at different times by the United Parliament since the period of the Legislative Union :

And whereas it is therefore just and expedient that a reasonable protection should be afforded to tenants making permanent and beneficial improvements on lands and tene-

ments held for limited and determinable periods. Be it enacted, etc. etc.

Substantially the three Bills had one object. They sought to secure compensation for *bona fide* improvements, effected by the tenant, on quitting his holding, or in case of eviction. They contained every safeguard that could be devised. If the improvements were made under any contract, or of any allowance or abatement of rent, no claim arose. The improvements were to be such as the landlord assented to, or they must be proved suitable to the holding, and such as added an increased letting value thereto. A new lease was a bar to any claim; the amount of compensation was to be assessed by five valuers drawn from the sheriffs' list of jurors; and so on. One reads these Bills to-day with amazement. How any Parliament ever came to reject such manifestly fair demands is a standing wonder; but, as a simple matter of fact, bill after bill, as moderate and reasonable as those described above, was rejected and thrown out. In 1845 the Devon Commission reported. Not one of the recommendations made by that body was adopted until twenty-five years had come and gone, and the report had been all but forgotten. What excuse can be pleaded for this inaction? The people were simply plundered and robbed; they suffered indescribable hardships. Parliament was, in reality, a class institution, and those who had the power exercised it in the interest of their class. This is all that can or need be said. I have already described the founding in 1850 of a Tenants' League, comprising representative men from North and South. Their demand was simple, just,

and clear. It was conceded in full in 1881; but the League perished on the rock of religious differences, and without effecting much for the Irish tenantry. Ten years later, in 1860, Deasy's Act was passed; to a large extent it was what is called a Consolidation Act. It meant something for lawyers; it made their work easier than it had been; it meant nothing for the tenants. It relegated the whole question of land tenure to what is called contract. The Irish tenant, so far as free contract is concerned, was as free as the slave to contract with his master.

I now approach what has been called the Revolutionary Period in regard to Irish land tenure legislation. This period extends from 1870 to 1896. Mr. Gladstone was the chief actor in its initial stages; Mr. Arthur and Mr. Gerald Balfour closed this great and fruitful epoch. I have already described the great awakening in Great Britain in regard to Irish affairs. It followed the concession of household suffrage in the boroughs, and it was stimulated and forced by the Fenian Rebellion. One of its first results was the Land Act of 1870. This far-reaching measure, so far as principle is concerned, was passed without serious difficulty. The Parliament of that day had been, in part, transformed; and although Mr. Gladstone cannot be said to have then mastered the Irish land problem, he had succeeded in getting hold of the root fact in connection with it. He had arrived at the sound conclusion that it was inequitable and unjust to allow a tenant to provide the working plant of the holding and then to evict him, with or without just cause, without com-

pensation, and so to appropriate the capital and labour he had expended. The moment this great central fact was realised and acted upon, the ultimate doom of Irish landlordism was sealed. It had all along been founded upon actual, if not legal, robbery ; it had been worked by savage and revolting cruelty. Mr. Gladstone began in 1868 to see men as trees walking in regard to Ireland and Irish affairs. His vision was limited ; his prejudices were strong ; his views as to the rights of property were of the old and orthodox school ; he considered and declared the three F's to be robbery ; therefore, and as might have been expected, the Act of 1870 was a halting and tentative measure. It laid down great principles ; it halted in their application. This statute practically enacted—

1. That a tenant, capriciously evicted, should be entitled to money compensation for certain classes of improvements, and for disturbance in the occupation of his holding.

2. It legalised and gave legislative assent to the various usages under the Ulster Custom.

3. It provided facilities of a limited and imperfect character for the creation of a peasant proprietary.

These latter provisions were known as the "Bright clauses." The Act of 1870 is now rarely appealed to by either landlord or tenant, the great measure of 1881 having practically superseded it ; and, as I have said, it is chiefly valuable because of its underlying principles. For the first time, with its enactment, the tenant's property, in and upon the soil, was recognised by Parliament. The compensation provided under its clauses may have been inadequate and insufficient ; the assertion of the

principle that the tenant had a property in his holding was a matter of supreme importance, and the recognition of the tenant's right of occupancy, under certain conditions, was hardly less valuable. Both the existence of the tenant's property and his right of occupation were clearly established ; and it may be truly said that everything which has followed in Irish land legislation has been based upon the two fundamental principles embodied in this measure. When the Bill was read a third time in the House of Commons a small minority of Irish representatives protested that the measure was insufficient, that it would fail to meet great existing evils, to satisfy the tenant's legitimate aspirations and his real needs. They had pleaded for what was called the three F's—fixity of tenure, fair rents, and free sale. To all three Mr. Gladstone was hostile ; but the Irish minority of that day proved to be right, and, in the end, the remedy they advocated was applied to Irish land.

The seventies were undoubtedly, and upon the whole, good years for the Irish farmers. Prices were high, and, for the first time, they had some sort of legal protection for their labour and capital. The Act had therefore a fair start, and had Irish landlords been wise the peace might have been prolonged. Two things, however, conspired to break the truce, and to precipitate the second and the great step in the agrarian revolution. The Irish landlords of the baser type set themselves, immediately after the passing of the Act, to destroy its main provisions. The machinery to effect this purpose was of a twofold character. The Act pro-

vided no means of resisting indiscriminate rent-raising; the result was that the evicting landlord simply recouped his compensation to the outgoing tenant by means of an increase of rent upon his successor, the incoming occupier. The evidence before the Bessborough Commission (1880) on this head is overwhelming, and witness after witness expressed his conviction that the increase in rent secured by the landlord far exceeded the amount paid in compensation under the Act. The second plan of evading the Act was by means of leases and agreements contracting the tenant out of its provisions and benefits. Leases at this time were highly prized by the tenantry, and security of tenure was greatly valued; the result was that many farmers signed leases and agreements, oftentimes without being fully aware of their actual contents. Upon this head the Bessborough Commission is also conclusive. The result was that ere many years had gone by the Act had been riddled; its practical value had been almost destroyed. Then came two bad seasons—1879-80. The crops to a large extent failed; rent could not be paid in full or, in many places, even in part. Time was refused. Evictions on a large scale took place; the Land League was formed; a land war arose; crime and outrage shocked the country and terrorised the people; and in the end Mr. Gladstone was compelled to reconsider the position. The Bessborough Commission was appointed, and reported—much to Mr. Gladstone's chagrin, it is said—in favour of the three F's. The Bill of 1881 followed. It was not a halting, hesitating measure in the same sense as

was the Act of 1870. Mr. Gladstone, at long last, boldly accepted the principle that the Irish occupier was, in fact, a partner with the landlord—that the one provided the bare soil, the other the entire working plant of the business. Accordingly the Act established a Court to discriminate between the property of the landlord and the property of the tenant. Upon the one a fair rent was to be fixed, upon the other no rent was to be charged.¹ Leaseholders were unfortunately exempted from the Act; but upon the whole class of agricultural tenants at will, the three great boons—fixity of tenure, subject to five statutory conditions; a fair rent, to be decided by a tribunal; and a qualified right of sale—were conferred. The passage of the Act constituted a veritable revolution. The dream of the land reformers had, at last, been realised. The League of North and South had not, after all, been organised in vain. The rejection of modest proposals, such as those of Mr. Sharman Crawford, had been avenged. Mr. Gladstone became the idol of the Irish agriculturists. His name was revered everywhere throughout Ireland. He had turned the mourning of Ireland into dancing; he had converted a nation of slaves into freemen. It was all absolutely and literally true. But the end was not yet.

The Unionists coming into office and power after the Liberal debacle of 1886 were at once compelled to face the land difficulty. The leaseholders, some 35,000 in number, had been excluded from the Act of 1881. Mr. Gladstone has been severely blamed

¹ See Section 8, Sub-section 9, Land Act 1881.

for this exemption. It was, of course, and on its merits, perfectly indefensible. That a yearly tenant on one side of a hedge or fence should be able to enter the Land Court, whilst a leaseholder on the other side should be debarred from this great privilege, was an eccentricity in legislation that could not endure ; but in considering the point Mr. Gladstone's difficulties have not always been sufficiently taken into account. He was proposing to carry a great revolutionary measure ; the opposition in the Commons was fierce and prolonged ; in the Lords the rejection of the Bill was at one time almost assured. In all such cases the question is certain to arise, "What can be given away to placate opponents?" The leaseholder went down before this spirit of compromise, and he had to suffer six years of injustice in order that the House of Lords might be placated. But when the year 1886 arrived, and the Tory leaders enjoyed less freedom and more responsibility, they were compelled to face the old issue afresh. Ireland was upon this point unanimous—the province of Ulster being more pronounced even than the South and West. Another serious issue also came to the front. A committee of the House of Lords—the Commons refusing co-operation—sat in 1882 to inquire into the working of a measure which had only come into operation at the close of the previous year. Lord Salisbury in his zeal for the supposed rights of property has been responsible for many blunders ; he beat even his own record upon this occasion. This committee had apparently one single object ; this object was to discredit, if not to intimidate,

the Land Commission. This Committee, composed mainly of landlords, proceeded to great lengths. They even presumed to question Mr. Justice O'Hagan as to the grounds of some of his decisions under the Act. Mr. Justice O'Hagan resented this invasion of his rights as a judge, and properly declined to answer questions that were as grossly unconstitutional as they were indecent and impertinent. But when all was said and done, the noble lords, with the Prime Minister at their head, had succeeded in their main object—they had influenced the Land Commissioners. So it came about that a serious question arose in 1887 as to the basis upon which the fair rents had been fixed from 1881 to 1886. The attack made by Mr. Parnell and the Opposition of that day was parried by the appointment of the Cowper Commission, which reported in favour of the inclusion of the leaseholders, and, accordingly, the Bill of 1887 was introduced. I have already stated that, as introduced, this measure was a sham. It did not provide for the leaseholders other than a small section of the class; it did not deal with the judicial rents fixed in the manner already described. When the Act received the Royal Assent both these points were covered, and although the grievance of the long and perpetuity leaseholders was still left unredressed—thanks mainly to Mr. Goschen's obstinacy—this omission was rectified by the Rent Redemption Act (1890), and this entire class of tenant was finally brought under the Act of 1881. 30,000 leaseholders have since then entered the Court, and the reduction in rent has amounted to 35 per cent. The judicial rents fixed between 1882

and 1885 were automatically reduced for a period of three years, and so these two serious issues were settled.

In 1894, Mr. Gladstone being again in power, a Select Committee was appointed to consider the working of the Land Act of 1881, and to make recommendations, if any, for its improvement. It was generally admitted that some such inquiry was now necessary. The first "statutory period" was about to expire. Admittedly the Irish Courts had, rightly or wrongly, made sad havoc with the intentions of the Legislature. Mr. Gladstone, recognising this, granted the Committee, and Mr. Morley, the Irish Chief Secretary, was appointed Chairman. When the history of the Irish Land Question comes to be written, the historian will turn to the records of this parliamentary body with interest and profit. The evidence, confined almost entirely to the official class, laid bare the whole procedure of the Land Commission and other courts in Ireland. The famous decision in the case of *Adams v. Dunseath*, by which the tenants had been deprived of the fruits of their own industry, was understood for the first time outside legal circles. It was then realised and made clear, on the evidence of Mr. Justice Bewley himself, that the whole tendency of the Irish Court of Appeal in the case of town parks had been to narrow the decisions under the Act of 1870. It was laid bare, to the horror of even the representatives of Irish landlordism on the Committee, that if a tenant reclaimed a bog, the increased letting value arising out of the reclamation did not go to the man who supplied the capital and did the work, but to

the landlord who simply did nothing. It was admitted by every witness that the rents fixed during the earlier years of the Commission had been fixed too high. In fact, as day by day passed in Committee Room No. 17, the enormities of the whole system were laid bare with remorseless effect. The Committee was appointed upon my initiative, and I had a fair share of the work involved; and when, after futile efforts to delay the proceedings, the Report was presented, a memorable scene took place. The Chairman's Report was an exhaustive document, and covered the whole ground. Mr. Brodrick, who led for the landlords, presented an alternative report, for which the Unionist party with one exception voted. It roundly declared that, with one trifling exception, no further land legislation was necessary. Two members of the Committee were absent, the one pairing against the other, when issue was joined. I voted for Mr. Morley's Report. The landlord party rose when the division was announced, and walked out of the room in a body, washing their hands of the entire business. In 1896 these same gentlemen were called upon by their own Government to vote for a good deal of what they had struggled against in 1894. Most of them by that time were in office, and the alacrity with which they ate their own words, and threw over their cherished friends, was an instructive lesson in the evolution of party politics. Mr. Morley's Bill, founded upon the Report of the Committee, was read a second time, and without a division, in 1895; but the chapter of accidents was against the right honourable gentleman, and the Government having been defeated on

the cordite vote went out of office, and the Bill perished.

In the new Parliament (1895) Mr. Gerald Balfour appeared as Chief Secretary. No man ever did better legislative work for Ireland during his period of office. No man was ever so poorly equipped, from a personal standpoint, for the work of governing that country. His name came to be a perfect red rag to the English garrison; and yet he never secured even the respect of a single section of the Irish people. He toiled on, getting up the facts connected with the country in pretty much the same way as a student gets up a question upon which he is to be examined; and when the landlord party forced Lord Salisbury to recall him in 1900, his departure from Ireland was chronicled in the Irish newspapers in an obscure corner paragraph. But for all this, Mr. Gerald Balfour deserved, and was worthy of, a better fate. Before the General Election of 1895 the Land Question had again been forced, and before I proceeded to my own constituency to seek re-election, I had, along with Sir Thomas Lea, received a direct pledge from the Cabinet that, should the Unionist party return to power, land legislation would be undertaken on certain specified lines. Before Mr. Gerald Balfour had, therefore, well settled down to his work in Dublin Castle, he found himself face to face with the Irish Land Problem.

The Act of 1896 has been frequently assailed by land reformers. Mr. Dillon, for example, never had much to say in its favour; on the contrary, the honourable gentleman has never wavered in the expression

of his opinion that it was a poor and all but worthless measure. Mr. T. M. Healy, on the other hand—and he unquestionably is a competent judge—has as steadfastly maintained that the measure was at once far-reaching in principle and effective in its results. I lean decidedly to the latter contention. It unquestionably reversed the Court of Appeal in *Adams v. Dunseath*, the great decision which governed the vital issue of tenants' improvements for fifteen years. The exposure of the injustice inflicted by that decision, which took place before Mr. Morley's Committee, ensured its reversal; and the best proof of the fact is that when David Adams came to get his rent fixed for the second term—the very tenant whose case had given rise to the original decision—the landlord admitted that, under the Act of 1896, he could not claim the house upon which the Court of Appeal had allowed him rent in 1882.

Again, the Act was specially valuable inasmuch as, under Section 40, it established the principle of compulsory sale of the landlord's interest in certain cases subject to the jurisdiction of the Judge of the Landed Estates Court. It cleared up doubts in regard to subletting, or rather it reversed judicial decisions upon this point. It did the same thing as regards demesne lands. It made an effort to assist the Land Commission in fixing a fair rent, and it plugged innumerable holes that the Courts had driven into the Act of 1881. We have now reached the close of the Revolutionary Period; let us see what has been accomplished.

- (a) The passage of the Land Act of 1870.
- (b) The passage of the Land Act of 1881.

(c) The passage of the Land Act of 1887.

(d) The passage of the Rent Redemption Act, 1890.

(e) The passage of the Land Act of 1896.

This is a great record, not only in itself, but it is simply marvellous when all the circumstances are taken into account. From first to last a great and powerful interest had to be fought. From beginning to end principles almost sacred in England had to be discarded. It is only necessary now to show how much of this great work has been brought to naught by administration in Ireland.

When in 1881 Mr. Gladstone decided to establish a great tribunal to stand between landlord and tenant, and to ensure justice for both, the selections he made for the great duty were everywhere regarded with favour and satisfaction. Mr. John O'Hagan, Q.C., was appointed Judicial Commissioner and raised to the Bench; Mr. Litton, Q.C., an Irish landowner, but representing the tenant farmers of County Tyrone in the House of Commons, and Mr. J. E. Vernon, an extensive and experienced land agent, were the two lay Commissioners. It was possible to object to the Act. The personnel of the Commission was recognised as all but faultless. I am now coming to difficult ground, but the truth must be told. In a few years Mr. Justice O'Hagan's health gave way; there had been rumours as to the decline in his powers, but the public were one day startled to find an official announcement of the learned judge's resignation, of Mr. Litton's elevation to the position thus vacated, and Mr. Gerald Fitzgerald's appointment as successor to Mr. Litton. Mr. Arthur Balfour was responsible for these appointments.

Mr. Vernon had died in the interval, and Mr. Wrench, another extensive land agent, had been appointed in his place. As the Commission stood at this time Mr. Justice O'Hagan represented law, Mr. Litton the tenants, and Mr. Wrench the landlords. Mr. Fitzgerald's appointment altered the balance of parties. Mr. Litton now stood for law, Mr. Wrench and Mr. Fitzgerald for the landlords; the tenants were left without their representative on the Head Commission. The breakdown of the Land Commission dates from these changes. Mr. Fitzgerald had been in the early days of the Commission an Assistant Legal Commissioner under the Act; he had been promoted to be a County Court Judge. Rightly or wrongly—I simply state the fact—the tenants believed the Commission as now constituted to be unfriendly to their interests and hostile to their rights. There has never been any real confidence in the Court since, by these changes, Mr. Balfour altered the balance of parties. Following all too soon came the illness and death of Mr. Justice Litton. His successor was Mr. Bewley, Q.C., an able, painstaking, and thoroughly impartial Judge. But physical infirmities speedily developed, and the learned Judge, convinced that he could not perform his duties, even to his own satisfaction, resigned his office. Mr. Meredith, Q.C., was his successor. In 1891 the Purchase and Fair Rent Departments were amalgamated, thus bringing in two additional Commissioners; and, at the same time, the Judge of the Landed Estates Court, Mr. Justice Ross, was added as a second Judge. The Head Commission, therefore, now consists of two Judges of the Supreme Court and four laymen. Out of the six members

of this great department, which deals with almost the entire landed property of the country, only two have even the most elementary knowledge of land, and only one is recognised by the tenants as having the slightest regard for their interests. This is the exact position to-day. No person in Ireland, be he landlord or tenant, professes to have the slightest confidence in this Court. It is not that anybody imputes or thinks of corruption—nothing of the kind—but it is universally felt that bias and prejudice exist to such an extent as to morally invalidate its whole procedure. And it is strictly accurate to say that the procedure of the Court is oftentimes so utterly inexplicable as to give rise to feelings that ought, in a country like Ireland, to be specially guarded against. In a country where suspicion arises almost naturally, it is not enough that a Court standing between hostile interests should seem to be fair; it ought to be above suspicion. Of course it is argued that decisions, manifestly hard, if not unjust, in the various Irish Courts—I do not specially refer to the land tribunal—are due to the defects of the Acts and to the carelessness of Parliament. The Courts, it is said, have to administer the law as they find it. No doubt. But are there no great governing principles regulating the interpretation of statutes? What does Lord Coke say upon this subject? That great exponent of the law—and his authority is not likely to be questioned—said (*Hayden's Case*, 3 Rep. 7, v.):—

In interpreting a statute we should consider—

1. What was the common law before the making of the Act.

2. What was the mischief and defect for which the common law did not provide.
3. What remedy the Parliament had resolved and applied to cure the disease of the Commonwealth.
4. What was the true reason of the remedy.

If these principles had been applied to the Land Act of 1881, what would have been the result in the case of *Adams v. Dunseath*? What was the "common law" in regard to tenants' improvements previous to the Act of 1881? It was that they belonged to the landlord. Was this not "the mischief and defect for which the common law did not provide"?

What was the remedy Parliament provided for the "cure of this disease of the Commonwealth"? Here it is¹: "No rent shall be allowed or made payable in any proceedings under this Act in respect of improvements made by the tenant or his predecessors in title, and for which, in the opinion of the Court, the tenant or his predecessors in title shall not have been paid or otherwise compensated by the landlord or his predecessors in title." And what was the "true reason of the remedy" applied by Parliament? Was it not to protect the weak against the strong, to prevent plain and palpable robbery? Can anybody believe that these principles were applied by the Judges in *Adams v. Dunseath*? Nobody outside of a lunatic asylum can imagine such a thing. That decision, until it was reversed by the Act of 1896, put into the landlords' pockets hundreds of thousands of pounds of the tenants' capital. It enabled the landlords to gather

¹ Land Act 1881, Sect. 8, Sub-sect. 9.

where they had not strawed, to reap where they had not sown ; it enabled them to rob the tenant by what is called "due process of law" ; it burlesqued the intentions of Parliament. The real truth is that every disinterested spectator in Ireland has come to the conclusion that the Courts approach these statutes with bias and prejudice against the whole code, in so far as it seeks to remedy great wrongs. The Acts, in the main, were right in intention ; Parliament realised with perfect accuracy the actual position of things. What it did not realise was that these Acts were to be administered by men who were personally hostile to their whole principle and policy. What never entered into the mind of Parliament, as a possibility even, was that a Judge charged with the duty of administering an Act should assail it in public documents, and denounce both its authors and its policy. Such a thing would be inconceivable in Great Britain ; it is not impossible in Ireland. The thing has actually occurred, and without a word of protest from either the Government or the ruling classes.

I have said that the tribunal charged with the great and solemn duty of standing impartial between the landlord and tenant is utterly discredited by all classes of the people in Ireland. In answer to this admitted fact it has been argued that this state of affairs shows that the Court is administering strict justice, that it is leaning to neither side, and, by displeasing both parties, is steering an even keel. The argument is plausible, but it does not bear examination. Take the point of appeals on questions of value. The practice is that a tenant desiring to have

a fair rent fixed serves what is called in the Act an "originating notice." In due course the claim is listed and heard before a Sub-Commission Court, consisting of a qualified King's Counsel or barrister-at-law, and two laymen who are supposed to be experts on the question of land values. The claim is heard in open court. Evidence is given as to the ownership of the improvements on the holding, the class of farming that is carried on—in short, all the "circumstances of the case, holding and district," are investigated. After this hearing in court the two lay experts proceed to inspect the holding. They check the claim for improvements by the actual facts; they decide upon the productive power of the land. Their report shows the gross rent which ought to be imposed on the assumption that the land, and everything upon it, is the property of the landlord. The nett fair rent stands when the annual value of the improvements of the tenant is subtracted from this gross rent. There is, of course, an appeal on either side, so far as law is concerned. The decision of the Assistant Legal Commissioner may be challenged, and even after the point has been decided by the Judicial Commissioner, his judgment may be, and very frequently is, carried to the High Court of Appeal. But there is also an appeal on questions of value. These appeals are made in thousands of cases—there are, as I write, some 12,000 waiting to be heard. When an appeal on value is taken the procedure is as follows. The Head Commission appoints two valuers (Court Valuers they are called to distinguish them from the Assistant Commissioners). These two experts are furnished with the report of the Assistant Commissioners

who fixed the fair rent. They proceed to the holding ; they inspect the land ; they take the decision of the Assistant Legal Commissioner as to the ownership of improvements, and hear no evidence of any kind. The proceeding is merely a checking of the report of the two Assistant Commissioners. Their final report is forwarded to the Head Commission, and a copy is sent to the landlord and tenant. In former times, when the four expert valuers agreed, or were in substantial agreement, the appeal was generally withdrawn ; but the advent of Mr. Justice Meredith has not only checked this wholesome tendency, it has made appeals both by landlord and tenant almost the rule. The learned Judge has recently complained of what he calls the volume of frivolous appeals. In reality he is the author of the system of which he complains. A Judge who varies the rent on appeal by five shillings on a twenty-acre holding invites appeals ; and this is quite a common incident. It is expensive folly, and well calculated to destroy the whole system. But worse remains to be told. I illustrate the pernicious practice which Mr. Justice Meredith has instituted by a case, the facts of which were admitted by the Chief Secretary in the House of Commons. It is a common type.

Here is the case of *Dakin v. M'Cluggage* as set out in the official reports :—

It is a case entirely uncomplicated as to buildings. There were none on the farm. The Sub-Commissioners who first inspected the holding were both exceptionally qualified experts. They found the farm to consist of three classes of land, viz.—

	A.	R.	P.			
(a) Manurable, soil heavy	7	1	20	16 shillings.	£5	18 0
(b) Rough and unreclaimed	4	2	15	3 „	0	13 9
(c) Heavy, cold and stiff	8	3	10	12 „	5	5 0
	20	3	5		£11	16 9

To this gross rent was added the sum of 19s. for proximity to the town of Larne (Co. Antrim) . . . 0 19 0

£12 15 9

Then came the deductions, viz. 200 perches of drains at 1s. 3d. per perch, capital value £12 : 10s. ; 400 perches of fences at 1s. 6d. per perch, capital value £30 ; and 50 perches of farm road at 2s. per perch, capital value £5. The increased letting value due to these improvements, which were the work of the tenant, the Commissioners fixed at £2 : 5 : 9, and taking this amount from the gross rent, the fair rent of the holding was fixed at £10 10 0

An appeal was taken. Two Court Valuers went over the holding. They fixed the gross rent at £12 : 7s., including 19s. for proximity to Larne. They practically agreed as to the allowance for improvements, and the fair rent was fixed at £10 : 7s. The appeal was heard in open Court by Mr. Justice Meredith and two other Commissioners. Here we have four experienced officers of the Land Commission who have gone over the farm. They have dug and classified the soil, and they are practically agreed as to the fair rent. In fact, the Appeal Valuers fix a somewhat lower rent than the Sub-Commissioners. Mr. Justice Meredith and his lay colleagues are not land experts. They never saw the land ; they would not know one class of land from another, and yet they fix the fair rent of this holding at £12 : 10s. They find the acreage and classification to be correct ; they simply add 1s. an acre to each of the three classes, and 13s. 7d. to the proximity value ; they agree with the valuers as to the increased letting value of the improvements ; and they bring out the fair rent at £12 : 10s.

What answer Mr. Justice Meredith would make upon this case I know not. Mr. Wyndham's defence

of the Judge's action in the House of Commons (February 1901) was that M'Cluggage's rent prior to 1881 was £26: 10s., that even with the increase levied by Mr. Justice Meredith the rent stood now at £12: 10s., and that he (the tenant) was very safe having secured a reduction of 60 per cent! Mr. Wyndham ought to study the Land Acts. Under the statutes the Commission must fix a fair rent. The fact that a tenant was over-rented and robbed in 1880 is no reason for over-renting and robbing him now; and the fact that four experts agreed that £10: 10s. constituted a fair rent for the holding is sufficient to prove that £12: 10s. fixed by two lawyers wholly without knowledge as to land values, is an unfair rent.

It need not be contended that in these decisions Mr. Justice Meredith is always wrong. There are frequently appeals where the boundaries are proved to be incorrect, or where fresh evidence shows that the Assistant Legal Commissioner failed to make sufficient allowance for the landlord's share in the improvements, and so increases in the rent fixed by the Court below are properly and legitimately made. But this was not so in M'Cluggage's case. The improvements had been wholly made by the tenant; this was admitted by the landlord, and no claim was made for any allowance on this head. The Head Commission simply added one shilling an acre to each of the three classes of land, and increased the sum allowed by the experts because of the proximity of the holding to the town of Larne. The four valuers had taken all the facts into consideration. These officers of the Court are each paid

£800 a year. Mr. Justice Meredith overruled them, not on a question of law, but on a question of the value of land which they had walked over and inspected, and an acre of which he had never seen ! This kind of thing is going on every day. This Court, utterly ignorant of land values, is constantly overruling its own highly-paid and extremely competent valuers, and forcing the tenants into the conviction that, in the expressive words of the people, "the Court consists of landlords' men." Dealing with the charges against Mr. Justice Meredith and his Court, Mr. A. J. Balfour asked what a Court of Appeal was for. Was it not to rehear the case and revise, if necessary, the judgment of an inferior Court ? No doubt. But the evidence should warrant the revision ; and the all but universal practice being to set aside the report of the experts in favour of the landlord contention makes the continuation of such a system perfectly impossible. Whatever happens in regard to land in Ireland, the right of appeal on questions of value must be restricted, if not wholly abolished.

Again, the Land Commission has utterly broken down on the question of Tenants' Improvements. When first appointed, and during the great rush of cases, the records made were often very imperfect, and even these have in many cases disappeared. The result is that improvements which in 1882, and the early years of the Commission, were proved to have been made by the tenant—proved by old men who had seen the work in progress—are now lost to the tenant by the disappearance of the records of the Court. The witnesses are dead and gone. The

record of the Court is either imperfect or it has wholly disappeared. And when the tenant comes into Court to have his second term rent fixed, he is met with these difficulties. The poor man imagined that, having made his case in 1882, he made it for all time. But the landlords are now fighting for bare existence. Every point is taken, and the tenant is accordingly held to strict proof. Every day the tenant fails to get credit for improvements which were proved to be his property at the first sitting of the Court. The landlord, who probably admitted the claim fifteen years ago, now says nothing. The presumption under the Acts that the ownership of improvements is in favour of the tenant counts for very little in such cases, and the landlord walks off with his ill-gotten gain. Proceedings such as I have described, and the fact that the allowance for improvements when they are proved is wholly insufficient, are fast destroying all confidence in the Land Courts. It is safe to say that one thing at least is absolutely assured—the country will never submit to a third revision of rents. It would be impossible for Mr. Justice Meredith or his colleagues to face the ordeal of such a committee as inquired into the results of the First Statutory Period. But, apart from this, the landlords could not survive the procedure. They have already lost 42 per cent on the contract rents fixed prior to 1881; another reduction would mean the extermination of almost the entire class. A way out will have to be found; happily it is at hand—but this belongs to the following section.

II. THE LAND QUESTION—THE CASE STATED— OCCUPYING OWNERSHIP

Irish land reformers, weary of the interminable strife, and the miserable outcome of the tenure system, had frequently turned their attention to the proposals for creating a peasant proprietary in Ireland. They saw, and had inquired into, the success of such a system in other countries. In France,¹ "where nearly one-half the land is in the occupation of its owners, and nearly two-thirds is owned by persons having less than 75 acres," it was the creation of the Revolution; but even after this stormy birth the plan was a proved success. In Germany it sprang from the far-seeing statesmanship of Stein and Hardenberg, and in Prussia, Bavaria, Wurtemberg, Baden, and the Rhine Provinces, large tracts of what is now the German Empire enjoyed unwonted prosperity under the system which displaced the feudal tenure under the nobles. In Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden the small owners of land were very numerous. In the United States landlordism, as we understand it, was unknown. In the English Colonies occupying ownership was the rule. In India the land system resembled State ownership. And it is well known that men like Judge Longfield, Mr. Jonathan Pim, Judge Lawson, Judge Flannigan, Mr. Law, Q.C., and Mr. John O'Hagan, Q.C.—all of whom have passed away, and who, naturally

¹ Mr. Shaw-Lefevre's *Report of Select Committee*, 1877-78.

enough, distrusted the legal recognition of dual ownership—pressed the matter on Mr. Gladstone's attention before the Act of 1870 received legislative sanction. These reformers had more success with Mr. Bright than with the great Liberal leader; and, before the Church Act passed into law in 1869, Mr. Bright secured that the tenants of glebe lands, and other Church property of the same character, should have the right, not alone of purchase, but of pre-emption. Again, in the following year, purchase clauses, popularly known as "the Bright Clauses," were inserted in the Act of 1870. Similarly the Act of 1881 recognised the principle of occupying ownership, and provided additional facilities for carrying sales into effect. All these clauses were intended to cover merely tentative proposals; they aimed at an experiment being fairly made; and there is no reason to suppose that Mr. Bright, who was the real author of the experiments, contemplated more than a reasonable addition to the owners of land in Ireland. Indeed, in a letter addressed to Lord Kilmorey, when the purchase of land was proceeding apace, the right honourable gentleman made it clear that things were going farther and faster than he had ever bargained for. Happily for Ireland, as well as for England, the statesmen who succeeded Mr. Bright did not share his opinions on this matter. They carried on the experiment, and speedily came to the conclusion that the real and only solution of the Irish land question lay in the transfer of the soil from owner to occupier. I propose now to deal with the various proposals to carry out this great object, commencing with those under the Church

Disestablishment Act of 1869. The Select Committee which sat in 1877-78, and which was presided over by Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, describes, in the Report of the Chairman, which was not, however, adopted, the procedure thus¹:—

(12) The first of these [experiments] was that under the Church Disestablishment Act, 1869. This Act directed the Church Temporalities Commission, in disposing of the landed property of the Church, to give to the occupying tenants thereof the preference of purchase at a fair price. It empowered them to assist the tenants in the purchase by leaving three-fourths of the purchase-money on mortgage at 4 per cent, repayable by instalments spread over 32 years. The property consisted of glebes and episcopal estates to the extent of 108,000 acres, in the occupancy of 8432 tenants paying an aggregate rent of £95,430, giving an average of 13 acres each.

The greater part of the property was glebe land situated chiefly in Ulster; the episcopal property was spread over all parts of Ireland. It is stated by Mr. Murragh O'Brien, the valuator employed by the Commission, that the glebes were for the most part in a poor condition, below the average in value of adjoining properties, let in small holdings, and more highly rented than is customary on large estates. The evidence shows that the Commissioners, while securing a full value for the property, have, by judicious arrangements, and by explaining the matter to the tenants, fully carried out the intentions of Parliament. In the Report of 1874 they say: "When we first commenced to offer the Church lands for sale to the tenants, they were not prepared generally to take advantage of the offers. Few were aware of the privileges conferred on them by the Act. As a class they were poor and ignorant, and offers of sale were frequently misconstrued; many

¹ Mr. Shaw-Lefevre's *Report of Select Committee*, Sects. 12, 13, and 14, 1878.

of them thought that the purchase-money³ would only secure a lease for ever, and that the rent would still be payable. The intentions and effect of the Act are now fully appreciated." And in 1875 they say: "The agricultural tenants are almost universally anxious to purchase their farms, and when they do not accept the offer of sale, it is generally from inability to pay in cash even one-fourth of the purchase-money as now required by the Act."

(13) Of the 8432 holdings, 5243 were sold to the tenants up to the end of 1877; of the residue, properties with 1066 tenants, who had been unable to purchase themselves, have been sold to the public, leaving properties with about 2200 tenants undealt with, of which a portion will probably still be sold to the tenants. Of the 5243 tenants who bought, a certain number, estimated at about 800, unable, probably, to find the balance of the purchase money themselves, assigned their right to some neighbouring landowner or local capitalist, or solicitor, who bought in their names; but, in these cases, the tenant generally received some consideration, obtaining a lease of more or less length, and not unfrequently received a perpetuity lease.

(14) A deduction must also be made of some 500 cases of mere house properties or labourers' cabins; but making these deductions, there still remain about 4000 cases in which agricultural tenants, holding from 3 or 4 acres to 50 or 60 acres, have by this process become owners.

The advantages secured by the purchasers under this Act were limited in the extreme, *i.e.* as compared with those secured under the more recent Land Purchase Acts of 1885 and 1891. No doubt there was the ownership in fee at the expiration of 32 years, but the Select Committee give an illustration which may be taken as applicable to the

whole of the tenants. The case given is that of a tenant paying a yearly rental of £10. "If the purchase-money was £230, or 23 years' purchase—the average price at which the land was offered to the tenants—the tenant was expected to pay down one-fourth, or £57 : 10s. ; the remainder was left on mortgage, repayable by half-yearly instalments of £4 : 15s. spread over 32 years. The new owner, therefore, has to pay £9 : 10s. per annum, or within 10s. of his old rent, and at the end of 32 years his farm will be free and absolutely his own." But Mr. Lefevre in making this estimate must surely have left out of sight that in a very large number of cases the tenants borrowed the fourth of the purchase-money which they had to pay down. They borrowed this money frequently at something like usurious rates of interest ; and with this extra payment added to the instalment on the mortgage, their old and excessive rent was increased. And the fact that the tenant purchaser became liable for the whole instead of part of the rates has also been left out of sight. Much of this borrowed money still remains unpaid. In some cases the "gombeen man," or money-lender, has entered into possession of the holdings. Where the purchasers had the fourth, or where it was supplied by friends, the transaction worked smoothly enough ; but the original rents were, as Mr. O'Brien has shown, much too high, and 23 years' purchase of such rents was an enormous price for the State to exact. Still, in spite of these drawbacks, the Commissioners report that "the new purchasers have paid the interest and instalments of capital with

great regularity," and that "improvements are being generally effected in the building of houses and in draining and reclaiming land." These reports, however, were made in the early years of the experiment, and when the bad years came, *i.e.* those of 1879-80, and 1885-86, the glebe purchasers suffered severely. In the end, when the Purchase Act of 1891 was passing through the House of Commons, they were relieved to the extent that the period of re-payment was extended from 32 to 49 years—the terms under the Ashbourne and Balfour Acts. This made a material reduction in the amount of the annual instalments.

Such is a brief narrative of the first real experiment in Land Purchase. The second was made when the Land Act of 1870 was passed. The proposals under the Church Act had proved fairly successful; those under the Act of 1870 broke down and have proved almost a dead letter. The failure and the causes thereof will be best shown by a reference to the Report of Mr. Shaw-Lefevre's Committee, which was appointed specially to inquire into the subject. The Report of the Chairman says¹:—

(22) Your Committee have adverted at length to the results of this part of the Irish Church Disestablishment Act, because it was the first of the two experiments made by Parliament directly with the object of converting tenancies into ownerships, and because the substantial success attained points out in so many respects the course which may be pursued in the future with the same object.

¹ Mr. Shaw-Lefevre's *Report of Select Committee*, 1877-78, p. 15.

(23) The other experiment made in this direction was that under the Irish Land Act, 1870, which is more immediately the subject of the inquiry of your Committee. Two methods were proposed in the Act to effect this purpose: (1) By giving inducements and facilities to landlords (whether limited owners or owners in fee) to agree with their tenants for the sale or purchase of holdings through the medium of the Landed Estates Court. (2) By directing the Landed Estates Court in the case of sale of landed property in the usual course in the Court, to afford, by the formation of lots for sale, or otherwise, all reasonable facilities to occupying tenants desirous of purchasing their holdings, so far as shall be consistent with the interests of the owners of the properties thus dealt with.

(24) In both cases the Board of Works was authorised to advance, by way of mortgage on the land thus sold to tenants, two-thirds of the value of the land, repaying by equal half-yearly instalments, spread over a period of 35 years, at the rate of £5 for every £100 so advanced, a rate which makes the interest $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The terms therefore are, in respect of the rate of interest, more favourable than those of the Church Commissioners, viz. $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in lieu of 4 per cent, but the proportion to be advanced on mortgage was less, viz. two-thirds of the value of the land in lieu of three-fourths of the purchase-money. There are also stringent provisions against the tenants mortgaging, assigning, charging, subdividing, or sub-letting their holdings without the consent of the Board of Works while any part of the annuities remains unpaid. And such act is to operate as an absolute forfeiture of the land to the Board of Works. By the amended Act of 1872 a sale was substituted for the forfeiture.

(25) Under the first process contemplated by the Act, where the vendors are tenants for life or limited owners, the Landed Estates Court is empowered to distribute the purchase-money in repayment of charges upon the land, in

accordance with priorities, or the purchase-money may be lodged in Court for investment in other land subject to the same trusts, and, pending such purchase, might be invested in Consols. The land sold to the tenant under this part of the Act is to be free from encumbrances, except rights of way, easements, and other charges specified in the Act. The Treasury was directed to prescribe the fees to be charged in respect of such sales, and the Court is empowered to apportion rents, charges, and covenants, etc., in respect of land thus sold.

(26) This part of the Act has been almost a total failure. In six years there have only been 35 sales to tenants, of which two only were tenants for life. The reason given for this failure is the great cost of passing such sales through the Landed Estates Court. Mr. M'Donnell, the Examiner of the Court, says: "A single tenancy will not bear the cost of the investigation of title. An owner is offered £2000 for a tenant's farm; he would have to pay £200 as the cost of showing title to it. The lowest cost for passing a property through the Court is £100, and there would be in addition the personal costs of both parties outside the Court." Mr. Lynch, the Registrar of the Court, agrees that the failure is, in fact, due to this, but adds that there are very few owners of estates who are anxious to part with a small portion of their estates, and there are very few estates which have not encumbrances upon them, and that there is difficulty in paying off these encumbrances according to their priority, or in getting their consent to the sale. You must pay off the first encumbrancer, whose encumbrance will exactly exhaust the amount of the purchase-money, and who would be satisfied to take the same in discharge for his encumbrance. It is necessary to make a title to the whole estate and to settle a schedule of encumbrances for the whole estate, for a charge which affects one part as a rule affects the whole. The owner has to take exactly the same proceedings in a sale under these clauses as under the ordinary vendor and vendee clauses of the Act. The costs are very much the

costs of an ordinary sale. The Treasury settled the percentage fees for sale under this part of the Act at the same rate as under the principal Act. No effort, therefore, appears to have been made to reduce the costs of small transactions. The sums received for sale of land under this part, if not paid away in discharging encumbrances, must be invested in Consols, subject to the trusts of the settlement. It is obvious, therefore, that it would not be a profitable operation for a landlord to incur costs in selling land to a tenant at 23 to 25 years' purchase of the rental and to invest the proceeds at $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent in Consols.

(27) Under these conditions the failure of this part of the Act is only what was to be expected. In 1872 a supplemental Act was passed, which enables the Board of Works to make advances to tenants purchasing by agreement from their landlords upon being satisfied as to the title, without the necessity of passing the property through the Landed Estates Court.

(28) Under this Act 47 purchases by tenants have been effected in respect of 15 different properties. The Board of Works appear to have laid down the rule very early after the passing of the Act, that they would entertain no proposal under it except where title was derived from the Landed Estates Court, on the ground that their solicitor had not sufficient staff to go through the titles which would come before him, and see if encumbrances were cleared off, and so forth. In consequence of this decision, very few applications have been made under this supplemental Act, and those, the titles of which were not derived through the Landed Estates Court, were at once rejected, except in the case of some sales by one of the City Companies where the title was notoriously good. It is stated that the Board of Works refused to advance where property was sold under the direction of the English Court of Chancery.

(29) It is clear that this supplemental Act has also failed for the same reason as Part II. of the Land Act [of

1870], viz. the expense of proving title, and the difficulty caused by encumbrances.

(30) There remains to be considered the operation of Clause 46 of the Act, which directed the Landed Estates Court to give facilities to tenants desirous of purchasing their holdings, by making lots, or otherwise, so far as this could be done without detriment to the interests of the owner of the estate, and directed them to hear applications on behalf of tenants from the Board of Works in this respect.

(31) During the six years ending 1876, 523 of these tenants were able to buy their holdings and to avail themselves of the Government advance, making, with the 82 cases previously mentioned, 605 holdings, of which the purchase-money was £598,000, and the Government advance £338,000. . . . Of these 605 holdings, 359 were bought in aggregate lots, 71 in number, and were subsequently subdivided, of which 50 were portions of the estate of Lord Waterford, sold in 1871; 164 were bought in separate lots in the ordinary sales of the Court. The purchases by combinations of tenants were confined mainly to the case of the Waterford tenants, and have lately almost wholly ceased. The sales to tenants are therefore practically confined to those cases where they have the opportunity of bidding separately for their own holdings; whether they have this opportunity depends upon the discretion of the examiners of the Court, whose duty it is to determine the lots in which the properties sold in the Court are put up for auction.

I have given these somewhat lengthened quotations from the report because they describe with clearness and minuteness, and authoritatively, the causes of the failure of the Act. No doubt the framers of the Act failed to grasp the situation; but the Parliament of that day must have had the faith which moves mountains if they imagined

that a policy which brought the three great obstructive forces in Ireland into play had even a chance of success. Between the Treasury, the Board of Works, and the Landed Estates Court, the Act, defective in itself, was literally strangled. The Treasury, the department authorised to fix the fees under the Act, took care of the lawyer "Dowbs" of Ireland. The Landed Estates Court saw to it that not alone should the pace be slow, but that every possible form of obstruction should be placed in the way of the policy approved by Parliament—all, of course, being done in the sacred interest of bankrupt owners of property. The Board of Works, manned by incapables—and whose record is written in failure all across Ireland—desired to have nothing to do with this work, which they considered to be outside their sphere of influence. And between the three departments the Act never had a chance. It was all but a total failure; but it resulted in one thing—it showed the Parliaments of the future what was to be avoided; it cleared the way for better and more courageous plans. Before passing on to the great and statesmanlike proposals of 1885 and 1891 it is only necessary to say that the Purchase Clauses in the Land Act of 1881 failed as completely as those in the Act of 1870.

I have already stated my opinion as to what went on during the short period in 1885 when the Conservatives were in office, and during which time they had the co-operation of the Irish Nationalist party in the House of Commons. Much of it was of a character that no member of the party would

to-day care to justify ; but they did one superlatively good thing—they proposed and passed the first real Land Purchase Bill. It must be remembered that the creation of a peasant proprietary was embodied in the Constitution of the Land League as one of the objects of that formidable organisation ; and, no doubt, after conference and consultation with the leaders of the Irish party, the Purchase Bill of 1885 was introduced in the House of Lords by Lord Ashbourne. It proposed to establish the Purchase Department of the Land Commission, and to appoint two Commissioners to take charge of the work. Recognising the failure of the other measures, passed with a similar purpose, it dealt effectively with their defects. Under the Church Disestablishment Act the advance was limited to three-fourths of the purchase-money ; under the Bright Clauses of the Act of 1870 it was still further limited to “two-thirds of the value of the land.” The Government now proposed to advance the whole of the purchase-money—retaining a certain sum as a guarantee deposit. The period covered by repayment of capital and interest was 49 years ; the vendor was to be paid in cash ; and the sum named in the Bill, as the limit to the advance, was £5,000,000.

In the House of Lords the Bill passed with very little difficulty. Lord Salisbury, under the “existing circumstances” of that day, laid aside his zeal for the rights of property ; the Duke of Argyll, as was his wont, prophesied evil ; Lord Spencer wanted a buffer in the shape of some Local Government authority to stand between the State and the

purchasers. But there was no active opposition, and the Bill, having thus received the sanction of the landlords in the Upper House, came down to the Commons at the close of the session, *i.e.* in the month of August, and had an easy and prosperous voyage through that House. It speedily received the Royal Assent. How many members of either House of Parliament saw the force of what was then being done? No doubt, if the Act failed, the experiment could be stopped and would cease to operate. If it succeeded, could its further progress be barred? With some it was, doubtless, the beginning of an effective agrarian policy in Ireland; with others it simply signified the capture of the Irish vote for the Tories at the approaching General Election in England and Scotland. But whatever the motives which influenced English statesmen of that day, Land Purchase has now come to stay; it is the real way out of the agrarian imbroglio; it has gone faster than most people anticipated, and the pace is bound to be quickened in the immediate future. Three years after, in 1888, a second sum of £5,000,000 was authorised, making £10,000,000 in all; and when, in 1891, this large sum had been practically exhausted, Mr. A. J. Balfour introduced and carried through Parliament his great scheme by which Imperial Credit was authorised to the extent of £33,000,000 for this purpose. The era of experiment was now held to be closed. In Land Purchase admittedly lay the final solution of the Irish agrarian question. It was, indeed, a momentous decision. That there should be heart-searchings was inevitable, and these were not to be wondered at; but the facts, from

the passing of the Act of 1885 down to the present moment, have all combined to vindicate the conduct of those who took this position. The Act of 1891 authorised the issue of guaranteed Land Stock to the amount specified, and made this stock exchangeable with Consols. The selling landlords ceased, therefore, to be paid in cash, and were paid in scrip. With Consols at 114 they much preferred payment in paper, and with the same form of security at 94 they preferred sovereigns. But this was the principal change made by the Act of 1891. The money under the two Ashbourne Acts was exhausted in six years, and the whole transfer of the land to the occupier is now carried on under the Act of 1891. The Acts, too, proceeded on wholly different lines from the halting and hesitating clauses of the Acts of 1869, 1870, and 1881. The Landed Estates Court was carefully shunned; the Board of Works was also shut out from the work; the Treasury could not well be eliminated, but its power to obstruct was curtailed, if not abolished. The vendor and vendee agreed as to price. The Land Commission inspected the lands, and decided whether there was security for the advance agreed upon. If such security did not exist, and if the vendor did not fall in with the decision of the Commission, the advance was refused. Where the security was adequate the sale proceeded subject to proof of title. It is at this point the greatest difficulty has arisen. The landlords who possess a title to their property capable of easy proof are very limited in number; and when examiners set to work on these old and musty documents the process is exceedingly slow.

But on the 31st March last the completed sales stood thus :—

Under the Church Act '	6,057
„ Land Act of 1870	877
„ „ 1881	731
„ „ 1885 and 1888	25,368
„ „ 1891	29,208
<hr/>	
Total	62,241

The amount actually advanced has been £21,182,268, and the repayments have been so regularly made that the irrecoverable arrears are all but *nil*. If ever wisdom was justified of her children, it has been in the case of those statesmen who first devised this great and far-reaching remedy for gross and admitted evils.

In the year 1896 another measure was passed which ought to have cleared the way for still greater results, but which has, to a large extent, failed to achieve its purpose owing to faulty administration. This Act took cognizance, for the first time, of the condition of business in the Landed Estates Court. This judicial establishment was created in 1858, and succeeded to the Encumbered Estates Court, to the work of which reference has already been made. Probably in no part of the governmental system has the art of “how not to do it” been brought to greater perfection than in this travesty of a Court of the Realm. We have seen how it strangled the Bright Clauses of the Act of 1870. It was created to sell bankrupt properties; it has resulted in arresting the sale of land and in setting up

a huge rent office under State auspices, and the creation of an army of Receivers and other officials whose whole personal interests are opposed to sale on any terms. The rapid transfer of land has thus been effectually barred. It is no exaggeration to say that this Court is a public scandal. Only the other day Mr. Justice Ross, the presiding Judge, commented upon the length of time some cases had been in Court. "In one case," said the learned Judge, "all the parties interested in a charge had died, and no representative had been raised." His lordship said the case "which had originated in the Rolls Court seemed to have been begun in the Middle Ages, but even so, he would not allow the Receiver to be kept on to the Day of Judgment collecting rents. Were these cases to go on for ever?" This was a typical case and one highly illustrative of the system. In 1896 Mr. Gerald Balfour attempted to deal with this farce of a Court, and the Act of 1896 provided (Section 40) that all estates in the Court over which a Receiver had been appointed, and which came under certain specified conditions, should be offered for sale to the tenants. The intention of the Act was excellent; but the progress under it has been, as might have been anticipated, very slow. In the first place, there were long arguments which went to the Court of Appeal, as to the construction of the Act itself. Was sale, under certain conditions, mandatory, or had the Judge been left a discretion? Had the Judge the sole right to fix the price to be paid by the purchasing tenants, or was he bound by the valuation of the Land Commission?

Questions such as these occupied many months, during which all progress was stayed. The Land Commission and the Court had also some difficulty in arriving at a working arrangement. The Judge held that he had the sole right of fixing the price to be paid by the purchasers; the Land Commission felt unable to sanction the issue of guaranteed Land Stock for more than the sum their experts certified as the value of the landlord's interest in the lands; and, as a result, both parties held their own. The Judge was declared by the Court of Appeal to have the absolute right of fixing the price; but the Treasury had no idea of allowing this high official to ladle out public money at his sweet will and pleasure to bankrupt landlords, especially when the expert valuers had declared his price to be in excess of the landlord's interest in the land. This unseemly quarrel went on for some time, and it was ended by an arrangement, perhaps the very worst that could have been arrived at, the Judge compelling the purchasers in certain cases to bring into Court an additional sum to that certified by the Land Commission. This sum being mainly borrowed, lessens, of course, the security for the State advance. I have already pointed out that in eight years from the establishment of the Encumbered Estates Court over 8000 sales took place, involving £23,000,000 sterling. Since the passing of the Act of 1896, some five years ago, some 500 sales, under Section 40, have occurred, the amount covered being about £500,000. Nothing could be more eloquent than these figures. The Court in the one case was in earnest; in the

other officialdom, from stem to stern, was at war with the policy represented by the Act. Men whose living depends upon the maintaining of a vicious system do not relinquish their hold very easily ; and, between receivers, solicitors, and agents, the Purchase System, in all its branches, has had much to contend with. The real value of the Act of 1896, however, lay in the fact that it asserted the principle of compulsory sale of the estates in the Court, under certain conditions, and gave the occupying tenants the right of pre-emption.

In the working out of this principle lies the future of the Irish Land Question. Dual ownership of the land has irretrievably broken down. It has failed, not because the principle was unjust or incapable of being worked ; it has broken down because the administrators of the Irish Land Acts have, in the main, proved their incapacity to deal with a problem involving class interests. It is a system which costs the country the sum of £150,000 per annum, and gives satisfaction to nobody. And this is the smallest part of it ; this is the amount which the taxpayer pays for the upkeep of the Land Commission. What it costs the landlord and the tenant in legal expenses cannot be much short of three times this sum. In innumerable cases the matter of fixing a fair rent does not end with the Court of first instance, where, in the main, it ought to end. Thousands of cases go to the Head Commission by way of appeal. In a large number of cases questions of law go from the Head Commission to the High Court of Appeal. The whole procedure represents a shocking waste,

and justifies the words of Sir Edward Fry in his Report (1897-98).

We have, during the course of our investigations, been deeply impressed by the weight of that burden which is laid upon the country by the existence of the great staff of officials employed under the Land Acts, and of the great body of solicitors and valuers who gather around them; and not less by the evil wrought by that unrest which is generated by the periodical settlement of rents. To pursue these subjects would be to go beyond the limits placed on our inquiry. But we venture to submit that if, by an automatic adjustment of rents or by their conversion into rent charges, or by other means which the wisdom of the Legislature may devise, the unrest could be stayed, and the burden of a perpetual recurrence of litigation cast off, a great boon would be bestowed upon Your Majesty's subjects in Ireland.¹

The system has further broken down owing to the action of a large section of the Ulster landlords in their attempt to destroy the Ulster Custom under which the Ulster tenant mainly holds his property. I have already pointed out how this campaign is waged by a reference to the case of *Ballantine v. Earl of Gosford*, in which the agent, Mr. H. A. Johnston, swore that it had been the practice on the estate for sixteen years to treat the Custom as non-existent where the tenant had gone into the Land Court and had a fair rent fixed. Mr. Justice Andrews in dealing with the case said that he was not called upon specially to decide this point, but he took leave to say that it was unsustainable at law. It follows, therefore, that on this large estate in County Armagh, every tenant who had sold his tenancy

¹ *Fry Commission Report*, p. 40.

within the time named had been deprived of his legal rights. In addition to this method of procedure, however, there has been a fixed determination to make war upon the Custom by landlords refusing to recognise the purchasing tenant. In olden days it was the exception for the landlord to act thus;¹ it is now the rule. And the policy has method behind its madness. The remedy for such action provided by the statute is compensation under the Act of 1870; but in selling to a purchaser under the Custom the outgoing tenant gets the full or market value of his improvements *plus* the value of the goodwill. By the 16th section of the Act of 1870 he can only get compensation for certain classes of improvements, as a tenant "quitting his holding." As I have already said, the landlord policy is to force the tenant back on the Act of 1881, *i.e.* to surrender his rights under the Custom. Once the landlord has accomplished this operation the cards are in his hand. He can force the tenant to sell at what is absurdly called the "true value," and next day he (the landlord) can sell in the open market at the market value, which is generally a third more than the "true value." It is sheer robbery, and it has done more than anything else to make tenure, under any conditions, impossible. I have fully shown the procedure in the Land Courts in the matter of appeals on value; and it can safely be said that, more than any living man, Mr. Justice Meredith has written the final doom of Irish Landlordism.

But, apart from these drawbacks in the Fair

¹ See Judge Longfield, *Cobden Club Essays*, p. 44.

Rent system, Parliament itself has made its continuance impossible. In 1891 it declared the experimental era in regard to Land Purchase to be at an end, and it provided at once the means and the machinery for inaugurating the new system of occupying ownership. And what has been the result? Taking all the Purchase Acts into account, more than 62,000 owners have been already created. So far as the State is concerned there has been no loss. The instalments, representing capital and interest, have been regularly repaid. Peace and order have been secured in many places formerly distinguished by turbulence and disorder. This is the gain to the State. But what of the tenant purchasers? In the case of the glebe purchasers the terms were not such as to tempt men to buy. The rate of purchase was 23 years of high and unrevised rents; the interest charged was high; and these men had to pay a higher annual payment on the terminable annuity than they had done on rents that were admittedly high. But under the Acts of 1885 and 1891 things have turned out differently. The average rate of purchase has been 17 years of the revised rents as against 23 on rents that were excessive. The rate of interest is $3\frac{1}{2}$ as against 4 per cent, with the result that the annual amount paid by way of a terminable annuity under these Acts is 25 and oftentimes 30 per cent less than the judicial rent for which they were previously liable. The consequences are such as might have been expected. Those who have been enabled to purchase because of the landlord's willingness to sell have been placed in a position which confers upon them enormous advantages.

This class of tenant pays to the State fourteen shillings per annum for that which the judicial tenant pays twenty shillings to the landlord. The judicial tenant will go on paying this rent for ever. The purchaser will own the fee-simple of his land at the end of a fixed number of years.

If our statesmen did not see what they were doing when they sanctioned this system, they must have been blind leaders of the blind. In any case it is impossible for such a system to be maintained. We might, by the aid of the War Office and the police, have maintained the old system of allowing the rent to be fixed by the landlord; it would have been possible even, with a Commission, fairly representative of landlord and tenant, to maintain the system of rent-fixing by a Court; but the plan of selecting a large number of tenants for these great privileges, and refusing to the remainder any relief, cannot finally endure. The State cannot go back; it cannot remain where it is—it must go forward. There must be equality of opportunity for all. Hence the necessity for Compulsory Sale of the landlord's interest in the land. There is no other way out.

I am well aware that the first impulse of the English people when such a proposal is made is to put it aside as the proposal of a nation of dreamers. They have proposed to put aside a good many things in recent history which they have afterwards taken to their hearts with infinite advantage. "Why," they ask, "should Irish landlords be compelled to part with their property against their will, and at a probable loss? Are English landlords to be similarly compelled? And if not—why not?"

These are just the kind of questions that come to the lips of men who have never considered the subject, and who take their principles and their political economy from the daily papers. The English and the Irish landlord have not a single feature in common. The English landlord is a real and *bona fide* owner of property. He lets a farm to a tenant as a fully-equipped going concern; he has built the house which the tenant occupies; he has built the out-offices necessary for carrying on the business of agriculture; he has drained the land and made the farm roads. Everything upon the land belongs to him, and is his absolute property. And he does more, he maintains everything on the farm in repair. What he gets as rent is frequently a very small return upon all this expenditure. He gets—but he gives back to the land a large proportion of that which he receives.

Is this the position of the Irish landlord? Does he let the farm as a fully-equipped going concern? Not at all—he lets the bare soil. Everything upon the holding, as a rule, is the property of the tenant. The house, the out-offices, the drainage, the fencing, the farm roads are all the creation of his industry. This surely constitutes a great and vital difference between the two classes supposed to have common attributes. The Irish landlord is not owner at all in the English sense. He does not receive even economic rent. He is a sleeping partner in a business carried on by the working partner. He simply holds a mortgage on certain lands. At the best he owns a rent-charge which is variable every fifteen years. Why should it be deemed harsh

and unreasonable for the occupying and working partner to pay off this mortgage, to redeem this rent-charge? The produce from the land does not now suffice to provide for landlord, tenant, and labourer. Why should not the landlord, who is unnecessary to the successful working of the business, be paid off? Why should he continue to draw capital from a business which cannot afford to pay it? Why do men persist in refusing to take a business-like view of what ought to be a simple commercial transaction? Why do they insist upon it being made into a matter of politics?

Then there is the question of the landlord being compelled to sell at a loss. It is to be feared that this is what in the end awaits him, with or without compulsion. What are the facts? The land all over Ireland is mortgaged and charged, not alone to its full extent, but far beyond its actual value to-day. It is well known that whilst seventeen years of the judicial rents has been the average price paid under the Purchase Acts, twenty-five years' purchase of these rents would not pay the charges upon many estates. In all such cases loss, and even ruin, is ultimately assured. But this result is assured with or without compulsory sale. In ten years the second statutory term will have expired, and the Irish tenants will be entitled, under the Act of 1881, to apply to have their rents fixed for the third time. Can anybody look forward confidently to such a transaction? The first and second revisions have resulted in an average reduction of 42 per cent. This has, in many cases, forced the landlord's hand, and what is

described as voluntary sale has come about. But a third revision may, is indeed almost certain to result in widespread ruin; and no scheme of purchase could then even alleviate matters, for the simple reason that the purchase rate would be fixed on the third period rents. Surely no person with any knowledge of the actual facts can look forward to such a catastrophe with anything but horror; and in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, it would not be impossible so to arrange a scheme of compulsory sale and purchase as to mitigate the apparent rigour and harshness of the transaction. The average rate of purchase, up to the present, has been seventeen years of the judicial rents. It is, no doubt, easy for the landlord to show that, even were his lands unencumbered, he must be a heavy loser by selling at such a price; and as the encumbrances must be cleared, his case is no doubt a hard one. But it is quite certain that no final settlement can take place on the basis of seventeen years' purchase of the rents all round. Compulsion must be paid for. It is paid for in every other transaction where it is employed; it must be paid for in this case; and, as it is the tenant who will reap the main profit, it is clear that he must pay something for the great boon conferred by this means. Nor would the tenant demur to this proposal. He would, no doubt, strike a hard bargain; but he desires to own the land he tills, and that he will pay for it is proved by the price he is ready to pay for the tenant-right of a vacant holding. And surely the State may fairly be asked to take its share in this work. The Irish landlord

is the creation of the State. These men have served as the English garrison in Ireland for centuries. The system of tenure they represent is the English system without its conditions, and, overtaken now in an economic and political revolution, they have undoubted historical claims on the English nation.

These claims have already been recognised in another department. When in 1898 Parliament proposed to assimilate the system of local government in Ireland to that of Great Britain, a storm arose. The English garrison in Ireland fully recognised all that the Local Government Bill meant. The saner of the class admitted that the change, great as it was, could not be resisted; and they succeeded in convincing the Government that there was some danger in a popularly governed Ireland of attempts to rate the landlord class out of existence. The Government admitted the danger. The landlords, as a class, were therefore declared exempt from their share of the poor-rate—the amount per annum, £350,000, being paid out of Imperial resources. Capitalised at twenty years' purchase, this payment represents a subvention of £7,000,000 to the Irish landlords. It was the price paid by the rest of the country to secure popular local self-government in Ireland; and it was cheerfully paid. It was something to get the dead hand off even in this sphere. But a precedent was created; and if it was wise and expedient to make such a bargain for such an object, the question arises at once and irresistibly: What would it not be worth to secure a permanent and honest settlement of the Irish land difficulty? With such a settlement the police force might be

reduced by one-half. The resident magistracy might almost cease to exist. The whole world of officialdom might be reorganised upon a sane and sober basis—it is the land trouble which mainly necessitates its bloated existence. And with the tenant paying the market value of the land *plus* a specified amount for the application of compulsion, and the State paying a bonus to get rid of the root of all Irish trouble, the landlord would have a chance of escape upon terms that would save those whom it is possible to save, and the Empire would have peace, security, and contentment, with a chance of a loyalty that has not existed since Strongbow landed on the shores of Ireland.

But there is the British taxpayer. Is he to be called upon to run this great risk? Is he to become the landlord of the whole land of Ireland? What of the danger of repudiation? Where is the security for such an expenditure as will be required? The answer is that no expenditure, in the ordinary sense, will be necessary. The taxpayer in these days knows only too well what is involved in the term "expenditure." By the Finance Act of the present year the Treasury was authorised to borrow the vast sum of £60,000,000 sterling on account of expenditure incurred in South Africa. This sum represents expenditure in the real sense; the money—actual coin of the realm—has been paid away. The loan has become part of the National Debt. If it is ever repaid, it will be out of surplus taxation, *i.e.* out of the pockets of the people; and the interest on the amount will be a charge on the nation at large. This represents real expenditure.

Contrast this with the proposed expenditure upon land purchase in Ireland. This means not an actual expenditure in cash ; it means the issue of £100,000,000 in guaranteed land stock similar to that authorised by the Act of 1891. The amount required will no doubt be added to the National Debt ; but it will not be added to the permanent debt, nor will it be repaid by the nation at large. On the contrary, the repayments will be made by the tenant purchasers of the land. The whole issue will be repaid in forty-nine years, or such term as may be fixed ; and the interest upon the amount represented by the stock will be paid, not by the nation, but by the Irish purchasers. This, as will be seen, is not expenditure at all ; it is a transaction by which great national and social objects are secured, and which the nation carries out by means of its unique credit. And then, what is the security ? The answer here is complete. The tenant purchases the landlord's interest in his holding ; but the interest of the tenant in the same holding frequently exceeds in value the interest of the landlord, and in the open market it frequently fetches more. Therefore the State will have as security for the advance the combined interest in the holding of the landlord and tenant. But how is payment to be enforced ? How is the State to meet a strike against payment ? Let the British taxpayer take courage. No rent strike has ever been successful in Ireland. Even against Lord Clanricarde the policy absolutely failed. The instalments under the Purchase Acts have been regularly paid ; there is no arrear. And, under these Acts, the land has been sold to all

classes of tenant—big and little. Nor have the sales been confined to Ulster, where no danger of repudiation is feared. The sales in that province represent approximately £7,000,000. In the other provinces they represent £14,000,000. The State is now, not the landlord, but the mortgagee upon 62,000 holdings. The risk is practically nil. But if collateral security is required there is no County Council in Ireland that would refuse to pledge the county rate for its own farmers. And with such security—the security of the combined interest of landlord and tenant in the land, *plus* the county rates—no one can say that the scheme breaks down at this point. But when everything has been said, the safety of the State is perhaps better secured by the passionate attachment of the Irish peasant to the soil. He has clung to it for centuries ; he clings to it still. Wherever the operation of purchase has been carried through, it has succeeded. Arthur Young's assertion that "ownership turns sand into gold" has once again been proved true.

Then it is asked whether those promoting this great revolution—for revolution it undoubtedly is—mean to get rid of one race of landlords only to create another and a worse class? By no means. The principle involved in the revolution is that of "*occupying* ownership." No sane person could contemplate the compulsory abolition of Irish landlordism with the certainty that, unless provided against, the relation of landlord and tenant would again grow up. No doubt a purchaser would, if he desired to leave, enjoy the right of selling his interest ; but the

incoming purchaser, in such a case, would have to occupy and cultivate the land. And subdivision or subletting would be intolerable. To permit such a system to spring up under the new order of things would be to revive the plan of letting in conacre in its worst form. The Bright Clauses of the Act of 1870 contained prohibitions on all these points, and successive Purchase Acts have prohibited much of what is feared during the period of repayment of the loan; but it is quite certain that the game would not be worth the candle if the ill-omened relation of landlord and tenant was again allowed to spring up under infinitely worse conditions.

Finally, there are those who ask whether any policy can be wise or expedient which proposes to expropriate a whole class—to expel from the country a great civilising influence? How, they ask, is Protestantism, especially in the south and west, to fare? Is it not mainly supported in these parts by this proscribed class? What of the influence of the landlord class in public affairs? These questions are asked mainly by people who do not know the country.

The real truth is that Irish landlordism as a civilising force has practically ceased to exist. Where is it to be found? Take the province of Ulster. Look at County Armagh. Lord Gosford has a great estate in this county, but his lordship has English engagements which make him more or less an absentee. The civilising influence in that neighbourhood is represented by Mr. Henry Augustus Johnston, Barrister-at-Law, and agent to this vast property. It is no exaggeration to say that the 1500 tenants on that estate would hail the estab-

lishment of occupying ownership with absolute delight, even at the expense of parting for ever with the civilising influence of the Rent Office. Take the county of Tyrone, with which I am necessarily familiar. Let any one go to Moy and visit the Charlemont estate. A lordly and modern mansion, which is said to have cost £80,000, stands vacant. The furniture has been sold. The civilising influence in this case is represented by a highly capable steward—a constituent of mine—and two or three labourers. There is not even a resident agent. Go farther on to Ballygawley in the same county. Look at the great empty mansion. Where is the civilising influence? Go to Derry. Much of the property of the London companies has been sold under the several Acts. In one or two cases the dead hand of London landlordism still remains. Are the portions under occupying ownership less civilised than those still under the companies? To ask the question is to answer it. The real fact is that Irish landlordism is played out. Where it exists, it exists merely for the purpose of taxing the community. It renders little or no service. Forty years ago it controlled, to a great extent, the parliamentary representation of Ireland; it cannot to-day secure, on its own merits, a single Irish seat. Five years ago it was supreme in local administration; outside one or two counties in the north this power has wholly passed out of its hands. It was wont to administer justice locally; even in this duty it is superseded and outvoted by a popularised magistracy. And as to the dependence of Protestantism upon this failing force, it will, indeed, be an

evil day for Ireland, and for Protestantism, when great principles come to depend on a system upon which destiny has set its seal. The roots of Irish landlordism have been destroyed. A rotten trunk and decaying branches are all that is left of it. Let men say what they will, the sentence of death has been pronounced—"Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground." There can be no plea in arrest of judgment. Whether the end is to come by violent or by constitutional means is the only question open. Every good citizen must prefer—vastly prefer—the latter. I believe the revolution can be carried peacefully, that the landlords can be saved from the absolute ruin that otherwise awaits them. But the end, in any case, is certain. It is for the British Parliament and the British people to decide between constitutional action and those violent and illegal proceedings which have secured so much for the Irish people in the past. Violence, as I have shown, has been their main weapon; it is high time that common sense had a turn.

It only remains to say here that the land problem in some parts of the west is wholly different to what it is in other portions of Ireland. Along the entire western seaboard the state of affairs is revolting in the extreme. The people are planted upon patches that are incapable of yielding anything resembling subsistence for human beings. They are in possession of the worst land—whilst land, prime in quality and plentiful in quantity, lies all around. His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant (Earl Cadogan), dealing with this problem the other day, advised the starting of industries in the towns, and the migration

of the people from these patches to the towns. It is all very well to talk of the creation of industries. Where are the capitalists to be found who will invest their money in any such enterprise? The conditions are all against success. Coal is a prime element in the success of any industry. How is coal to be got to Connemara at a price which will permit of competition with the world? No; the real remedy for the congestion and the misery of the west is to be found, not in crowding the towns, but in the policy carried out tentatively by the Congested Districts Board. These grazing tracts must be compulsorily acquired. They must be cut up and made into workable holdings. The people must be brought back to the land from which their fathers were driven. And no time should be wasted in setting about the work. The enterprise is a great one, but in its successful achievement lies the fortunes of those long-suffering and much-enduring peasants who people these sad but beautiful wastes.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EDUCATION CONTROVERSY—THE CASE STATED

AS in England, so in Ireland, the education of the people has been, from the beginning of the past century, a bone of contention, a constant rock of offence and source of strife. This is one of those things hard to be understood. In England the warfare has been carried on, to the infinite detriment of education, between church and chapel; in Ireland it has been waged with no less force between priest, parson, and presbyter. The contending parties, with conspicuous and honourable exceptions, have not troubled themselves so much about the interests of education; it has all along been a war of churches and sects. Had the aims of the clericals been, in the main, educational, they would have turned their eyes towards Scotland, and taken the lesson afforded by that country to heart. There they would have found parish schools dating from the days of John Knox, who was a great statesman as well as a fierce ecclesiastic. These schools have developed until every district has its School Board controlling the primary education of the entire country. There are to be found Presbyterian, Epis-

copalian, and Roman Catholic all under School Boards, elected by a democratic suffrage, and there is hardly a sign of friction. In that country, too, there are four ancient Universities. These great seats of learning have never been the exclusive appanage of the rich. The very opposite is the truth. They have been, in a very real and true sense, the heritage of the poor ; they possess endowments ; they are, in a very restricted sense, denominational, but not a ripple disturbs the even flow of those streams of real learning which have meant so much for Scotland and Scotsmen. When the Irish national system of education was founded in 1833, the great mass of the people were, as a matter of fact, illiterate. This condition did not arise from choice ; it was one of the hardships attendant upon the penal laws. The Roman Catholic gentry and clergy had to be educated abroad ; the mass of the people had to go without any training at all. The establishment of the national system followed hard upon Catholic emancipation, and it undoubtedly had a tolerably fair start. Founded upon the fundamental principle of "united secular and separate religious instruction," it at first succeeded in uniting, to a considerable extent, all parties in Ireland. Dr. Murray, the then Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, was an ecclesiastic of singularly moderate views. Everything that has come down to us from his time shows that he was not only willing, but anxious to co-operate with the Government and his fellow-countrymen in anything that tended to alleviate the sad condition of the people. His Grace therefore joined heartily with Lord Stanley, and was one

of the first Commissioners appointed to administer the new system. Dr. Whately, the Protestant Archbishop, also gave in his adhesion, and took a seat at the Board. But Dr. Whately was a long way in advance of his time and of his people. The Church Education Society had come into existence. This organisation, which still maintains a languid existence, was supported by those who conscientiously believed in forcing the Bible and the Church Catechism down the throats of Roman Catholic children, and that they were even guilty of a sin in the sight of God if they failed to do so. Dr. Whately has been accused, on the strength of some published letter, of duplicity in the matter—that he believed in the Church Education Society principle, but preferred, as regards Roman Catholicism, to go round rather than sanction the plan of a direct frontal attack. Be this as it may, the Archbishop joined the Board. The Presbyterians who were, from the first, the strongest supporters of what came to be called Mixed Education, were represented by the Rev. Dr. Carlisle, the minister of the church worshipping at Mary's Abbey, Dublin.

The national system of education began its work, therefore, under favourable auspices. The Roman Catholic Church accepted the principle upon which it was founded. It was not accepted as representing the ideal in education of a Catholic people; it was accepted with reserve as being the best possible system under all the circumstances of the time. The Established Church party, to a large extent, held aloof. Their idea was that of the English Church party to-day—religious

education, with, in their case, an Irish soupçon of proselytism thrown in. That the Bible and the Church Catechism should be only taught at certain hours of the day was to them perfectly horrible; it was a hauling down of the flag, a lowering of the colours that could not be tolerated. It was a withholding of the light in a country which required it above everything else; it was dishonouring to God's word. And the Church Education Society, therefore, came into existence—in fact it had its origin in those Kildare place schools of which the student and the politician have heard and read much in the past. National schools, however, speedily grew up and covered the land. The fundamental rule worked out in this way. Each school had a patron or manager. As a matter of fact these authorities were generally either the priest, the parson, or the Presbyterian minister of the district. "Secular instruction" was fixed for certain hours of the day, during which a public announcement of the fact was displayed within the school. "Religious instruction" followed, and during the period allotted for it a similar announcement was displayed. In a school in the south under Roman Catholic management a Protestant child was supposed to leave during the time devoted to religious teaching. In the north the Catholic child was supposed to act likewise. For many years the system worked smoothly and well. A training college for teachers, male and female, was established in Dublin. Model schools of a higher type than the ordinary primary school were set up in many of the large towns, and there appeared to

be, at least, a chance of harmonious action and work; but with the arrival of Archbishop Cullen in Dublin a change came over everything. The spirit of liberalism which had distinguished his predecessor at once ceased to exist. Ultramontaniam of the severest type took its place. The model schools were banned. Even the training college for teachers was looked at askance. The union of all creeds in the schoolroom was discouraged. Denominationalism became the order of the day. The model schools were the first object of attack. These schools were of a very high character, and for more than thirty years they have been assailed, in season and out of season, by the Roman Catholic authorities. Upon the whole they have held their ground fairly well; but under the new system of attack, *i.e.* the establishment of schools conducted by the Christian Brothers in the same centres, their efficiency in some districts has been sensibly impaired. They now number thirty. In eight centres no Roman Catholic pupil was in attendance during the year 1899. In other places the attendance of Roman Catholics has been reduced to a minimum. Thus in Galway the attendance in the same year stood at eight; in Coleraine it was four, in Parsonstown seven, in Sligo one. On the other hand, in such a centre as Dublin, where four of these schools exist, the roll showed 1668 Roman Catholics and 489 Protestants. In Cork the numbers were, Roman Catholics 225, Protestants 201. In Belfast there were 1058 Protestants and 20 Roman Catholics. The total attendance at the thirty schools during 1899 was 9505, the

net cost being £35,682:1:7. Out of this sum £32,738:9:7 was paid out of the Education Vote. It will thus be seen that the average cost per child is about £4. The first, and perhaps the fatal, inroad upon the working principle of the system was the establishment of convent and monastery schools. There are now 346 schools of this character. In some districts they are probably the only schools in existence, and they are attended by a small minority of Protestant children. During the hours for secular instruction all goes well. When religious instruction is entered upon these children are supposed to withdraw. But they very probably have travelled a long distance to the school, and where, in wet weather, are they to go? The result is that they practically stay, and are present at a Roman Catholic service. And here is the real difficulty of the system. In remote districts, where the Protestant minority is very small, it is considered a grievance that this small number of children should stand in the way of the desires of the dominant Roman Catholic majority. The Conscience Clause is, of course, pleaded; but, as everybody knows, the Conscience Clause is a very slender and imperfect protection. As a friend of mine in the south said to me once—"I sent my boy to the Christian Brothers School because the education was better than that given in the Model School. Before he had been there a month I found he had learned to cross himself." This is exactly how it works out. The rules of the Board are not broken; it is the "atmosphere" that does it. But allowing for all these drawbacks, and after seventy

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years of useful work, there were in 1899, 8670 national schools in operation. The total number of children actually on the rolls numbered 785,139. Of these

592,391	or	75.5	per cent	were	Roman Catholics.
91,592	„	11.7	„	„	Irish Protestants.
86,747	„	11.7	„	„	Presbyterians.
8,684	„	1.1	„	„	Methodists.
5,725	„	0.7	„	„	Other denominations.

Out of the 8670 schools in operation there were 5386 attended solely by one denomination, 3993 being Roman Catholic, 1393 being Protestant. In the remaining 3264 schools the attendance was mixed and representative of all creeds. Of course, under the circumstances of the country, large districts being entirely Roman Catholic, and similar districts being almost entirely Protestant, it was inevitable that schools practically denominational should exist. And in large centres each church or congregation has established its own school. These are all, of course, under the rules of the Board; but the elasticity of these rules is wonderful, and perhaps a wise discretion in their working is allowed. The truth is, that the whole trend of the system is toward Denominationalism. Compulsion has been applied in certain areas, but it is neither universal nor effective. Practically the whole cost of the system is borne by the State. In 1899 the total cost was £1,215,815:8:5. Of this sum £1,149,692:8:5 was voted by Parliament.

The question of Irish education will always be a difficult and debatable one, but it is clear that no system which is not based upon compromise can

meet the special needs of Ireland. In the south and west, and, indeed, in some parts of the north-west, there are many places where the Protestant minorities are so small as to make the maintenance of a school of their own impossible. They must, therefore, attend schools in which the great majority of the children are Roman Catholics. But no one will contend that the children represented by these minorities ought to be subject to any interference with the religious convictions of their parents—such a thing would be simply intolerable. Hence the advantage of the present system, and the wisdom of the fundamental rule of the National Board. It is inevitable in a country like Ireland, where religious differences prevail in an acute form, that the system should gravitate into Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Methodist schools, at which the attendance is confined to children whose parents belong to one or other of those churches. This is no invasion of the principle of the system. No rule is broken. And to have devised a plan which permits of this reasonable denominationalism, and yet secures comparative safety for those living in districts where their numbers do not warrant such a school, was a triumph in statesmanship. Its author, Lord Stanley, ought to be held in grateful remembrance.

In the matter of Secondary, or, as it is called, Intermediate Education, Ireland was up to the year 1878 lamentably deficient. It is true that, scattered all through the country, there existed endowed schools which were, to all intents and purposes, secondary schools; but there was no real system

of secondary education. In 1878, however, an Act was passed, appointing a Board of Intermediate Education. The functions of this Board were defined in Section V. of the Act thus :—

It shall be the duty of the Board to promote intermediate secular education in Ireland in the manner provided by this Act ; that is to say :

1st, By instituting and carrying on a system of public examination of students :

2nd, By providing for the payment of prizes and exhibitions and the giving of certificates to students :

3rd, By providing for the payment to managers of schools complying with the prescribed conditions of fees dependent on the results of public examinations of students :

4th, Generally by applying the funds placed at the disposal of the Board for the purposes of this Act as hereby directed ; provided that no examination shall be held in any subject of religious instruction, nor any payment made in respect thereof.

The endowment of the system was provided for out of the Church Surplus by Clause VIII. :—

For the purposes of carrying this Act into effect, the Commissioners of Church Temporalities in Ireland shall out of the property accruing to the Commissioners under the Irish Church Act 1869, when and as required by the Board, provide for the use of the Board, either in cash or in securities or rent-charges of an equivalent value, such amount, not exceeding in the whole One Million Pounds Sterling, as the Board shall estimate to be required for the purposes of this Act.

The annual income arising from the amount so provided shall be applied by the Board for the purposes of this Act, and if and so far as the same shall not in each or any year be required to be so applied, the same shall be invested by the Board by way of accumulation in the purchase of Government securities.

The system thus set up has developed real and serious abuses, and a Commission has recently dealt with these, more or less satisfactorily. But there can be no question that the Act has given an enormous stimulus to education. It has provided much needed financial aid for high-class schools. It has stimulated and encouraged these schools to higher and better work, and it has rewarded individual students. The income accruing from the investment of £1,000,000 divided amongst the schools and the students has quickened the zeal and the energies of both. And so far the religious question has not appeared to trouble the situation. The Board consists of twelve members, six being Roman Catholics, three Irish Churchmen, and three Presbyterians.

It is when we come to Higher Education that the great trouble commences. It is very sad that it should be so—that Irishmen of all classes and creeds should be unable to agree upon a rational compromise on a subject of vital importance to the nation. By their apparently hopeless divisions a large proportion of the youth of Ireland are unable to avail themselves of the existing facilities for higher education—a fact of the gravest moment and one which ought to impress all parties.

The existing facilities for higher education in Ireland are as follows :—

- (a) The University of Dublin, with which is affiliated Trinity College.
- (b) The Queen's Colleges of Belfast, Cork, and Galway.
- (c) University College, Dublin.
- (d) Magee College, Londonderry.
- (e) The Royal University—an examining body.
- (f) Maynooth College.

Trinity College, Dublin, has a great and famous history. It was founded in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and richly endowed out of forfeited Catholic lands. It is the college of Burke and Goldsmith and many famous Irishmen. Standing right in the centre of the city, it not only holds a commanding position, it has an equally famous position historically. Avowedly founded as a Protestant college, it still retains its ancient character to-day. Up to the passage of Mr. Fawcett's Bill, almost its entire offices and emoluments were barred against any one who did not make public profession of the orthodox Episcopal faith. Presbyterians, Methodists, Moravians, were shut out in common with Roman Catholics. But, aroused by Mr. Gladstone's measure of 1873, which, although withdrawn, had a disturbing effect, the authorities assented to Mr. Fawcett's Bill, and the offices and emoluments of Trinity College were thrown open, almost without reserve, to all, without regard to religious belief. This was a great step, but it did not suffice to divest Trinity of its Protestant character. The Divinity School, which Mr. Gladstone would have handed over to the Church Representative Body, remained. There was still the ancient tradition. There was still the Protestant atmosphere. And, as I have said, Trinity still maintains its Protestant character, and there are a good many people, Roman Catholics and Protestants, who would be sorry to see anything done that would divest it of its historical associations.

The Queen's Colleges were founded by Sir Robert Peel in 1838, and were intended to meet

the difficulty caused by the Protestant character of Trinity College. The Queen's University—abolished in 1882—was founded in order that students attending these colleges should obtain their degrees without being forced to resort to the University of Dublin. Sir Robert Peel and his colleagues undoubtedly meant well in establishing these colleges. They sincerely desired to provide the benefits of higher education for those who objected to Trinity College. But they utterly failed in their diagnosis of the situation. The Roman Catholics objected to Trinity College because it was exclusively Protestant, not because it acknowledged the Christian religion. In setting up colleges that were strictly undenominational, and which did not directly acknowledge the Christian faith, Sir Robert Peel fell into a natural but a serious mistake. The Roman Catholics have steadfastly refused to acknowledge these colleges. A famous Protestant of that day described them as "godless." The phrase stuck ; and although they have done excellent work, they cannot, with the exception of Belfast College, be said to have been a success, or to have met the want Peel desired to meet. Education from the Catholic standpoint must be based upon religion. A system which rigorously shut it out was worse in the eyes of the Catholic Church than that which they protested against.

In the early seventies a Catholic University was founded in Stephen's Green, Dublin, by John Henry Newman. Without endowment, and without prestige, it was doomed to failure ; but out of this effort arose what is called University College, which occupies the

same buildings as did the defunct University. Magee College, Londonderry, exists mainly for the collegiate education of Presbyterian ministers—the College at Maynooth fulfilling the same function for the Catholic clergy.

As time wore on, and education progressed, the situation became simply intolerable. It was not that Catholics met with difficulties in attaining to higher education. After they had passed through one or other of the several colleges, they had to resort to the University of Dublin to obtain their degrees. There was no other degree-conferring body in existence. Hence the formation of the Royal University.

The Royal was founded upon the model of the University of London as it existed at the time, and is simply an examining body. Its only function is to put the hall-mark upon education wherever it has been obtained. Students from the Queen's Colleges, from University and Magee Colleges, receive their degrees after being duly examined, and an undoubted want has been supplied. But even with this stop-gap arrangement—for its best friends admit it to partake of this character—the great question still remains : how are Roman Catholic scruples on this subject to be met, or are they to be met at all? As I write, a Royal Commission has been appointed to inquire and report upon the question. It is a Commission of singular intellectual power, and ought to give light and leading to those who desire such guidance. But the real truth must be faced. Very few people in Ireland are guided by reason upon the subject. Reason is almost wholly

thwarted and controlled by prejudice. The rival parties are drawn up in battle array. On the one side are those who feel that to grant the Catholic claims is to go back, not forward ; who maintain that the hope of Ireland lies in mixed education ; who profess to desire the mingling of Catholic and Protestant in a common university ; who shrink from the idea of what is called a clerical seminary ; who think that if Roman Catholics will not accept the present facilities for higher education, they ought to provide for themselves or go without.

This is one side of the case. It has a firm hold of great masses of the people, many of them, of course, profoundly ignorant and animated by pure no-popery views ; but it also counts large numbers of broad-minded men, friends of education and of progress, who honestly think that Mr. Balfour is putting the hands of the clock back and inflicting a deadly injury upon the Ireland of the future.

On the other hand, there are those in Ireland—apart from the Roman Catholics—to whom a Catholic college or university appears but a poor ideal in education, but who feel unable to resist the Catholic claims. Their fundamental point is that if, from religious scruples, their Catholic fellow-countrymen cannot avail themselves of the existing facilities, means ought to be provided for satisfying their needs. This class is in a small minority among the Protestants of Ireland. And the conflict, I fear, will go on, opinion being to a great extent divided in Great Britain, and upon similar grounds. I content myself with merely stating the case.

CHAPTER IX

THE FINANCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND—HOW THE CASE STANDS

THIS is a question of dry facts and figures in which there is not room for a particle of sentiment, and it must, therefore, be treated solely from this standpoint. The prevailing feeling on the Irish side is that Ireland was unjustly treated at the period of the Union ; that when, in 1817, the exchequers of the two countries were amalgamated, this injustice was continued in another form ; and that, later on, in the fifties, when the income tax was extended to Ireland for the first time, and the spirit duties raised, the burden of taxation became all but intolerable, and constituted a great injustice. In England, as might be expected, a contrary view is taken and held. It is generally admitted, however, that the Irish proportion fixed at the time of the Union, viz. 1 to $7\frac{1}{2}$, was beyond the capacity of Ireland to pay, and, as a matter of fact, much of it was never paid, the financial scheme breaking down. But it is stoutly held that, by the amalgamation of the exchequers in 1817, and the application of the doctrine of indiscriminate taxation to the three kingdoms,

every semblance of grievance was removed—that taxation by geographical areas is impossible, and that the existing plan of dealing with units of population instead is at once fair and expedient. With the public mind in such a condition, it is not to be wondered at that more than one Select Committee has been appointed during recent years to inquire into the matter. These inquiries all came to nothing; but when the Home Rule Bill was placed before the country the question suddenly became acute. If such a Bill was to be passed, the readjustment of the financial relations between the two countries became an urgent necessity, and a Commission to inquire afresh into the subject was accordingly appointed by Royal Warrant, dated May 26, 1894. This body consisted of fifteen members—seven of the number being Irishmen. Mr. Childers, who had been in more than one Liberal Cabinet, and had served as Chancellor of the Exchequer, acted as chairman until his death, when his place was taken by the O'Connor Don. The reference under which this Commission sat was set out thus :—

To inquire into the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland and their relative taxable capacity, and to report—

(1) Upon what principles of comparison, and by the application of what specific standards, the relative capacity of Great Britain and Ireland to bear taxation may be most equitably determined.

(2) What, so far as can be ascertained, is the true proportion, under the principles and specified standards so determined, between the taxable capacity of Great Britain and Ireland.

(3) The history of the financial relations between Great

Britain and Ireland at and after the Legislative Union, the charge for Irish purposes on the Imperial Exchequer during that period, and the amount of Irish taxation remaining available for contribution to Imperial expenditure ; also the Imperial expenditure to which it is considered equitable that Ireland should contribute.

The Commission did its work quickly, and produced, as might have been expected, a perfect litter of reports. But, allowing for two deaths in the ranks of the Commission,¹ the whole of the Commissioners, with the exception of Sir David Barbour and Sir Thomas Sutherland, signed a report covering the following points :—

(1) That Great Britain and Ireland must, for the purpose of this inquiry, be considered as separate entities.

(2) That the Act of Union imposed upon Ireland a burden which, as events showed, she was unable to bear.

(3) That the increase of taxation laid upon Ireland between 1853 and 1860 was not justified by the then existing circumstances.

(4) That identity of rates of taxation does not necessarily involve equality of burden.

(5) That whilst the actual tax revenue of Ireland is about one-eleventh of that of Great Britain, the relative taxable capacity of Ireland is very much smaller, and is not estimated by any of us as exceeding one-twentieth.

To begin at the beginning, it may be said with absolute certainty that Ireland was unduly taxed under the Union Settlement. With the exception of Sir Thomas Sutherland all the Commissioners admit this fact. Sir David Barbour, who presented a separate report, and who failed to agree with his colleagues on the general issue, coincides with their

¹ Mr. Childers and Sir Robert Hamilton.

opinion in this respect. At pages 113 and 114 of the Report, Sir David reviews the settlement as between the two countries and the principles which governed it, and concludes in the following words:—

However excellent the intentions of the Government of Great Britain at that time may have been, it must be admitted that the question of the proportion in which Ireland should contribute to joint expenditure [1 to $7\frac{1}{2}$ ¹] did not receive before it was accepted that degree of careful consideration which its importance deserved and demanded.

This is an exceedingly mild condemnation of a transaction under which Ireland suffered so much. The proposal to fix the Irish contribution at 1 to $7\frac{1}{2}$ was resisted by the Irish Parliament, Grattan pointing out, what was perfectly true, that “Ireland would stagger under a weight which was a feather on the shoulders of a wealthier people.” But argument was of no avail. In the Report signed by Mr. Sexton and others the fallacies underlying the settlement are clearly set forth thus:—

Undue advantage was taken of Ireland in the Union scheme of finance by fixing her future contribution on the basis of the proportion of the swollen expenditure charged against Ireland in the previous seven years to the British expenditure in that period. The calculation on which the proportion of 2 to 15 was founded was manifestly fallacious for three reasons. 1st, Because it reckoned as permanent annual Irish expenditure the temporary military charges connected with the insurrection and the Union. 2nd, Because it left out of the expenditure the great annual charge for debt, although to the extent of

¹ This means that of every £100 Ireland should contribute 12 per cent and Great Britain about 88 per cent.

the proportion to be fixed by the calculation Ireland was to be liable for all the new debt incurred, and the proportion of charges for existing debt was the obvious measure of this liability; and 3rd, because a false average was struck between the higher proportion of Irish expenditure to the moderate British expenditure in peace, and the lesser proportion of it to the inflated British expenditure in war. By devices of such a character the proportion of 2 to 15 was fabricated, which in sixteen years extracted from Ireland £70,000,000 of taxes and charged her with £130,000,000 of debt.

The real truth would appear to be that, although the proportion of 1 to $7\frac{1}{2}$ —or, as Mr. Sexton puts it, 2 to 15—might have been bearable in time of peace, it was simply ruinous to Ireland in time of war. It was fixed to endure for twenty years. The results were so disastrous to Ireland that the arrangement broke down, and the question had to be faced before the allotted time expired. Upon this issue the verdict is quite clear and cannot be set aside. The predominant partner, notwithstanding the “good intentions” for which Sir David Barbour gives him credit, simply overreached himself. Ireland was unable to carry the load fastened upon her shoulders by the Union Settlement. And in 1817, three years before the expiration of the allotted time, the Settlement had to be re-opened, and an Act was passed in the Imperial Parliament amalgamating the exchequers of the two countries, abolishing the Irish Consolidated Fund, and consolidating the debts of the two countries.

This brings us to the second period, *i.e.* from 1817 to the present time. The period has now been reached when Ireland enters into full partnership

with Great Britain. Under the Union Settlement it is quite certain that Ireland was to be regarded as a separate and distinct financial unit, and Lord Castlereagh distinctly stated at the time that the proposal for revision after twenty years gave Ireland the best "possible security that she could not be taxed beyond the measure of her comparative ability, and that the ratio of her contribution must ever correspond with her relative wealth and prosperity." And under the Seventh Article of the Union she was entitled to claim "exemptions and abatements" in taxation, should the measure of her ability at any time be exceeded. The position of Ireland in 1817 is thus set out by Mr. Childers (par. 52).

By the operation of the provisions of the Act of Union, of the resolution passed by the House of Commons in 1816, and of the Act of Parliament consolidating the two exchequers taken together, Ireland passed in 1817 from the legal position of a separate country, contributing in a certain proportion towards joint expenses, to that of a fiscally as well as legislatively integral part of the United Kingdom, except for such "particular exemptions and abatements" from the general taxation as Parliament might allow, a privilege to which Scotland might also be entitled.

We consider this provision of the Act of Union to be of great and essential importance to the present inquiry, showing, as it does, that the claim of Ireland to special consideration in fiscal matters, as a distinct section of the United Kingdom, has never been suffered to become extinct, and that it is therefore, even from a legal point of view, impossible to consider Ireland as being, fiscally, no more than a certain group of counties of the United Kingdom.

The main question arising at this point has a legal as well as a fiscal bearing. The Royal Commission

held that the paragraph in the Seventh Article of the Union in regard to Ireland's right, under certain circumstances, to "exemptions and abatements" in taxation, stands intact in spite of the Act of 1817 which amalgamated the exchequers and imposed indiscriminate taxation. The Parliament of to-day practically acts upon the theory that the words quoted above were repealed by implication by the Act of 1817, and that no case for exemption or abatement can therefore be made. But two things may be said here. On a question of such vital importance "repeal by implication" is not a strong defence; and again, Ireland up to 1853 enjoyed special and important exemptions from taxation.

The argument is academic rather than practical, for no strong body of opinion in Ireland demands differentiation in taxation. The doctrine of indiscriminate taxation within the three kingdoms is an admitted necessity, but all the same it is impossible to allow the words in the Act of Union to be set aside by consent. Ireland cannot in this controversy afford to give away anything.

It is, however, when the year 1853 is reached that we find the provisions of the Seventh Article of the Union settlement seriously assailed. In that year Mr. Gladstone, with a surplus of over one million pounds sterling, imposed the income tax upon Ireland for the first time, and the spirit duties were raised—the whole additional taxation of this period now amounting to over two million pounds sterling. Commenting upon Mr. Gladstone's action at this period, Sir David Barbour in his Report (par. 33) says:—

The special circumstances of Ireland do not appear to have received due consideration at this time. Many arguments of a general character might be employed to justify the equalisation of the spirit duties and the imposition of an income tax, but Ireland was entitled, under the Act of Union, to such exemptions or abatements as her circumstances might require, and the time was not opportune for imposing additional burdens upon her.

Dealing with the same period, Mr. Childers in his Report (par. 81) says :—

We think that if the House of Commons in the period 1853 to 1860, when the great enhancement of taxation took place, had fully considered the circumstances of Ireland, they would not have felt themselves justified in increasing the taxation of that country by means of the income tax and the equalisation of the spirit duties.

What were the "special circumstances" of the country to which Sir David Barbour and Mr. Childers refer? Ireland was slowly recovering from the great famine. In another chapter I have pictured the country at this period as lying like a corpse upon the dissecting table. She was fighting against the agricultural disturbance caused by free trade. She was in the position described by Mr. N. Senior, who, since 1842, had held the position of Poor Law Commissioner in Ireland. The country, he said, giving evidence before a Select Committee on taxation, was "by no means prosperous"; it was "the most suffering country almost in Europe." He further said "that a rapid change for the better was not possible under any circumstances," that the country "had been impoverished by bad seasons, emigration, absenteeism, the repeal of the Corn Laws, and other

causes," and he concluded by defining Ireland as "a country in which the mass of the population were worse fed, worse lodged, worse clothed, worse paid than any part of Europe to which his travels had extended."

This, then, was the country upon which Mr. Gladstone and the British Parliament placed a fresh burden of £2,000,000 per annum. This burden was imposed in spite of the Seventh Section of the Act of Union. It was imposed against the passionate protest of the Irish representatives. And all that a man like Sir David Barbour has to say upon it is that "it does not appear that the special circumstances of Ireland were duly considered at the time"! But Mr. Gladstone had what was called a set-off against this extra taxation. Writing in regard to this theory the O'Connor Don says in his Report (par. 38):—

As a set-off for these additional burdens thrown upon Ireland he wiped out a capital debt amounting, in 1853, to somewhat over £4,000,000, which had been contracted mainly for the relief of the poor during the period of the great famine with which Ireland had been visited. This debt had been converted into terminable annuities lasting as to three-fourths for forty years and as to one-fourth for various periods of from ten to thirty years.

With these annuities, which went under the name of the "Consolidated Annuities," we shall deal later on. Here it is sufficient to remark that the existence of these annuities furnished the excuse for adding to the taxation of Ireland a sum estimated by Mr. Gladstone in 1853 to amount to £460,000 a year for seven years. The income tax then im-

posed upon Ireland as a temporary measure has since been continued without intermission as a permanent branch of the revenue, and has produced up to the present date £23,500,000, or, on an average, £550,000 a year. Ireland, as we have seen, was robbed under the Union settlement. Here, again, the predominant partner followed the old and well-worn path. The poor country was unjustly burdened with taxation in order to save the shoulders of the rich and the affluent partner. Nobody need feel surprise at this. It is part and parcel of that policy which prevailed for seventy years after the Union, and which I have dealt with in previous chapters. But in this instance the action was of a peculiarly flagrant character. It was unjustifiable in itself—nobody to-day seeks to defend it; and the set-off was, in plain language, of the nature of a delusion.

I now come to the closing part of this case. The contention of the Irish party is that Ireland has been, ever since the Union, and is now, over-taxed. Upon this contention it is important to note that eleven of the Royal Commissioners reported

That whilst the actual tax revenue of Ireland is about one-eleventh of that of Great Britain, the relative taxable capacity of Ireland is very much smaller and is not estimated by any of us as exceeding one-twentieth.

Sir David Barbour, although he does not sign the Report containing this paragraph, concurs (*Summary of Conclusions*, par. v. p. 125). And Mr. Blake puts the matter in clear form thus:—

Applying the stated proportion to the tax revenue of 1893-94, to which Great Britain contributed £75,800,000, the contribution of Ireland should have been only £3,790,000, whereas it was in fact £6,643,000, or about two twenty-third parts of that of Great Britain. It was thus over £2,850,000 more than Ireland would have contributed if taxed according to that estimate of her relative capacity which, as already indicated, we all agree is full, and which some of us think too high.

Mr. Thomas Lough, M.P., has compiled the figures of the question up to the present date, and by his courtesy I am able to give them here. They comprise two tables—one of revenue, the other of expenditure.

REVENUE.—TABLE showing the Population and Revenue of Ireland from 1893-1894 to 1899-1900, set out under the three heads of Direct and Indirect Taxes, and Non-Tax Revenue.

	1893-1894.	1894-1895.	1895-1896.	1896-1897.
	£	£	£	£
Income Tax . . .	653,417	664,574	718,001	682,000
Death Duties . . .	473,927	503,475	648,413	718,000
Stamps . . .	248,600	262,876	272,399	296,000
	1,375,944	1,430,925	1,638,813	1,696,000
Tea, etc.	564,080	583,282	604,204	615,000
Tobacco	1,174,642	1,194,533	1,217,431	1,227,000
Alcohol	3,529,053	3,554,975	3,614,348	3,631,000
	5,267,775	5,332,790	5,435,983	5,473,000
Non-Tax	134,828	126,485	128,368	132,000
Post Office	752,293	763,647	795,168	809,000
Crown Lands	37,809	36,498	36,052	36,000
	924,930	926,630	959,588	977,000
Total of Taxes . . .	7,568,649	7,690,345	8,034,384	8,146,000
Population	4,600,599	4,574,764	4,560,378	4,551,723

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REVENUE—Continued.

	1897-1898.	1898-1899.	1899-1900.	1900-1901.
	£	£	£	£
Income Tax . . .	687,000	704,000	711,000	974,000
Death Duties . . .	642,000	738,000	653,000	874,000
Stamps	305,000	301,000	296,000	291,000
	1,634,000	1,743,000	1,660,000	2,139,000
Tea, etc.	627,000	653,000	735,000	964,000
Tobacco	1,263,000	1,201,000	1,177,000	1,366,000
Alcohol	3,620,000	3,600,000	4,047,000	3,991,000
	5,510,000	5,454,000	5,959,000	6,321,000
Non-Tax	111,500	124,000	133,500	119,000
Post Office	824,000	846,000	878,000	908,000
Crown Lands	35,000	35,000	34,000	34,000
	970,500	1,005,000	1,045,500	1,061,000
Total of Taxes . . .	8,114,500	8,202,000	8,664,500	9,521,000
Population	4,543,782	4,535,516	4,500,764	4,456,546

EXPENDITURE.—TABLE showing the Irish Expenditure and the Imperial Contribution from 1893-1894 to 1899-1900, giving details of the principal items.

	1893-1894.	1894-1895.	1895-1896.	1896-1897.
	£	£	£	£
Law and Police . . .	2,235,698	2,171,406	2,285,279	2,192,500
Dublin Castle . . .	862,438	840,302	916,699	878,500
Education	1,141,966	1,165,728	1,220,007	1,356,000
Local Grants	569,643	637,364	709,050	720,000
Post Office	792,810	801,561	807,720	823,000
Imperial Contribution	1,966,094	2,073,984	2,095,629	2,176,000
Total Expenditure . .	7,568,649	7,690,345	8,034,384	8,146,000

	1897-1898.	1898-1899.	1899-1900.	1900-1901.
	£	£	£	£
Law and Police . . .	2,243,500	2,172,500	2,255,500	Details not given. 6,232,000
Dublin Castle	889,500	890,500	795,500	
Education	1,275,500	1,288,000	1,293,000	
Local Grants	860,000	1,183,000	1,611,000	
Post Office	866,000	943,000	1,025,000	
Imperial Contribution	1,980,000	1,725,000	1,684,500	2,253,000
Total Expenditure . .	8,114,500	8,202,000	8,664,500	9,521,000

The over-taxation, judged by the standard of taxable capacity, being, in my opinion, proved, two questions arise—first, the question of set-off; second, the best method of dealing with Ireland's claim.

In regard to the first of these points, the contention is twofold. The majority of the Royal Commissioners deny that the expenditure upon the civil government of Ireland can be classed as local in its character. Much of it is as truly Imperial in character as that upon the army and navy. Sir David Barbour, on the contrary, and representing the average British opinion, maintains first that all the expenditure in Ireland upon the civil government of the country is local in its character, and that as the revenue from Ireland has increased, so has the expenditure, and that the one is a fair set-off against the other. Thus in 1819-20 the estimated true revenue of Ireland was £5,256,564; the estimated local expenditure was £1,564,880; the balance available for Imperial services being £3,691,684. In 1893-94, with a smaller population, the true revenue was £7,568,649, the estimated local expenditure £5,602,555, the amount available for Imperial services being £1,966,094. Sir David Barbour (p. 119, par. 35 of his Report) says:—

It will be seen from the table in par. 33 that since the year 1860 the expenditure for Irish purposes has largely increased. If, as I hold, in considering the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland, the amount of expenditure for Irish purposes should be taken into account as well as the revenue raised from Ireland, this increase is a fair set-off against the increased taxation of the present day.

In fact, Sir David upon the whole finds that on this basis of calculation Ireland is a gainer rather than a loser.¹

Mr. Childers in his Report (pars. 289-293) deals with this question in a totally different fashion:—

If, however, in the result of this investigation it appears that, in consequence of the incidence of taxation, Ireland contributes a revenue largely in excess of her relative capacity, and the question under consideration becomes that of the extent of the compensation to be given to Ireland or adjustment to be made in her favour; then, and in that case, it appears to be fair to inquire whether any charges, which in England and Scotland are met by local rates, are in Ireland borne by exchequer revenue to the relief of the ratepayer.

The facts that the cost of the police force is excessively large in Ireland, and that the legal and civil establishments special to Ireland cost more in proportion to the population than those special to Great Britain, are, we think, as irrelevant to the question of compensation or relief as they are to that of taxable capacity. But it is, in our opinion, fair to take into account as a set-off the fact that the inhabitants of Ireland make very small contribution from local rates or subscriptions towards the cost of primary education, or towards that of the police force, which would be necessary if the Irish police corresponded in numbers and character to that of England and Scotland, while the inhabitants of Great Britain *qua* ratepayers do contribute largely to the cost of their own police and schools.

We have already stated our conclusion that the taxable capacity of Ireland should be taken as being, as at present, about one-twentieth of that of the United Kingdom. If the revenue derived from Ireland were in proportion to this relative capacity, it would be about $2\frac{3}{4}$ millions a year less than, in consequence of the existing incidence of taxation, it at present is.

¹ See Report par. 49, p. 123.

It appears that, if the police in Ireland were on the same footing as in England and Scotland, the total cost of the force would be rather more than £400,000 per annum instead of about £1,400,000 as it actually now is. Of this sum, on the same supposition, half, or about £300,000, would be borne by the local rates. To this sum of £300,000 about £200,000 must be added to represent the cost which would fall on Irish rates or Irish subscribers if education in Ireland were a local burden to the extent that it is in England and Scotland; altogether, we think the extent of the set-off, upon the ground or principle indicated, may be taken as half a million.

If this set-off is deducted from the sum of $2\frac{3}{4}$ millions found to represent the excess of revenue derived from Ireland over taxable capacity, the sum of $2\frac{1}{4}$ millions per annum will represent the measure of any adjustment to be made in favour of Ireland, whether by reduction of taxation or by allocation of revenue.

The Treasury view, pure and simple, may be gathered from the position taken up by Sir Edward Hamilton. This competent and able official substantially affirmed before the Commission the view held by Sir David Barbour, viz. that "if the taxation of Ireland is separately considered, the cost of Irish administration should also be separately considered." Lord Farrer and Lord Welby had apparently great difficulty in arriving at a conclusion, for at page 50 of the Report they say:—

Under these circumstances, we are of opinion that the excessive expenditure on Ireland which we have described, although it may be no justification for the excessive taxation of Ireland, is at once a pecuniary loss to the taxpayers of Great Britain and a cause of demoralisation in Ireland, that the two evils of excessive taxation and excessive expenditure are intimately connected, and that the evil

of excessive taxation cannot be properly remedied unless excessive expenditure be abated at the same time.

The Irish position on the Commission is to be found at page 5 of the Report. There it is roundly asserted that when the contribution of 2 to 15 was fixed at the time of the Union, "the Imperial expenditure to which these respective contributions were to be made included not only the whole civil expenditure of Ireland, but even special grants for Irish purposes."

I have been at pains to elucidate this point, because when the issue comes to be fought out much will depend upon the view taken in regard to it. Summing up the argument, I think so much is clear :—

(a) That if taxation is to be governed by taxable capacity, *i.e.* by ability to pay, Ireland is grossly over-taxed.

(b) That the English contention that the application of the doctrine of indiscriminate taxation equalised everything is not sound—identity of rates of taxation not necessarily involving equality of burden.

(c) That it is practically impossible to set up a system of differentiated taxation, and that therefore the application of the principle of "exemptions and abatements" as prescribed in the Act of Union is not a workable proposal.

(d) That the question of set-off is to be judged on reasonable grounds—the extreme contention on both sides being inadmissible.

(e) That on the facts of the entire century there is a debt owing to Ireland. And as a solution of the difficulty the proposal of Mr. Childers at page 194 of his Report deserves the serious consideration of Parliament.

After rejecting the proposal of differentiated taxation, Mr. Childers says :—

The third method is to deduct in every year a certain sum from the general public revenue and allocate it by way of financial adjustment to special purposes in Ireland, with the object of promoting the wealth and prosperity of that part of the United Kingdom.

This, in my opinion, is the way out of this difficulty for England. One of the poorest countries in the world is tied for weal or for woe to a rich neighbour. The poorer country has little or no control over expenditure. This is mounting up to an alarming extent. The Budget of the present year represents roughly an expenditure of two hundred million pounds. To this huge drain Ireland must contribute her quota. And the poorer country feels the strain. What is a feather-weight to England is a mill-stone to Ireland. There are manifold advantages in the Union for Ireland ; but there are serious disadvantages, and this is one of the chief. If England ever comes to recognise her obligations in this matter, there will be little difficulty in finding methods for useful expenditure. In promoting land purchase, in assisting the landlords out of the *impasse* in which they find themselves, in aiding the beneficent work of the Congested Districts Board, dealing as it does with a population unable to help themselves, in carrying out the pressing work of arterial drainage in the country, and in many other ways, there can be an expenditure which will be certain to bear the best of fruit, in the peace, order, and contentment of the

people. It will not do to deny the obligation. The case has been heard before a competent tribunal, established and set up by England. The verdict has been delivered: it is against England and in favour of Ireland's contention. Until this verdict is set aside by a higher court and a more competent tribunal, the obligation of England to Ireland stands proved.

CHAPTER X

IRELAND AT WESTMINSTER

ENGLAND has been made to pay in various ways for her shameless action in 1800, and the account, to all appearances, is by no means closed even now. But it may be said with truth that for seventy years after the Union Ireland gave comparatively little trouble in the Imperial Parliament. Grattan, Foster, and the giants of the pre-Union time, no doubt, did valiant work. O'Connell and Shiel laid bare their country's wrongs. Keogh and Sadleir reminded the whole world that the patriot was still ready to sell his country and that the traitor could still exact his infamous reward. Maguire and Gray fought a hard and uphill fight, in what may be called the transition period from death to life. But it was not until 1874 that real activity began to show itself in the Irish representation—that the dry bones gave signs of life. In that year an Irish parliamentary party was formed under the leadership of Isaac Butt. Mr. Butt was intellectually a giant, and there was no office in the state or in his profession that he could not have filled and adorned. The honourable and learned gentleman had sat in Parliament before 1874,

and as a Conservative. In the forties he had been the stalwart champion of the Union against O'Connell. His career had, however, been a chequered one. But after a long interval, during which he disappeared from public life, and gave himself, more or less fitfully, to his profession, he reappeared on the political horizon as a Home Ruler. As I have pointed out, Mr. Gladstone's policy woke up the nation once more to the possibilities of that parliamentary action which the Fenians had sternly decried; and Mr. Butt presided over the famous meeting at the Bilton Hotel in 1870, at which a large number of Irish Conservatives gave in their adhesion to Home Government, and committed themselves in favour of a Parliament for the management of domestic affairs in Ireland. The only real description of this memorable gathering is to be found in Mr. A. M. Sullivan's *New Ireland*. Mr. Sullivan was present, and gives the names in full of those who attended and took part in the proceedings. But although the meeting was unique and important—although an association was formed and a propaganda started—the rift soon came. Most of the Protestants attended the meeting out of pure pique. The Church had been disestablished, and, so far, disendowed. The land had been attacked. Men interested in both these institutions felt sore, and struck out at the English Government, which, it was felt, had betrayed them. Few of these gentlemen, however, really meant business; and when the association, over whose birth they had presided, gathered popular strength, and when by-elections were won under its auspices, they quietly dropped out of the pro-

cession, and resumed their old position in the Tory ranks. But the modern Home Rule movement was practically launched at this meeting in the Bilton Hotel, and the Home Rule parliamentary party made its first effective appearance under Mr. Butt's leadership after the General Election of 1874. Mr. Butt was an ingrained Conservative and a rigid constitutionalist. His plan of battle was to discuss Irish grievances, to make of Home Rule a kind of parliamentary annual, to have a field-day once a year, take a division, be beaten, and go into winter quarters with the subject for the remainder of the session. This, however, did not suit the younger spirits of the party. A field-day once a year was all very well in its way. They panted for sterner action and more exciting methods. Mr. Butt was now getting old. He resisted the young men as long as he was able, but old age began to tell. His chance had come too late. It was a touching sight to see the old man—this great intellectual giant, this splendid orator, who also wielded a most facile pen—gradually going under before the fiercer spirits of the day. And the end soon came. Mr. Butt was gathered to his fathers, and was buried at Stranorlar, in County Donegal, where his father had been rector, and where there is not even a tombstone to mark his resting-place. With an interval during which Mr. William Shaw acted as leader, and after the General Election of 1880, Mr. Parnell, who had really broken Mr. Butt's heart, became leader of the Irish party.

For several years Mr. Parnell, aided mainly by Mr. Biggar, had been at work testing his powers on

the parliamentary machine at Westminster. The rules of the House of Commons had been framed centuries ago, and existed almost entirely for the protection of minorities—framed in days when protection for minorities was urgently required; above all, they had been framed on the assumption that they would be temperately and moderately used. Mr. Parnell and Mr. Biggar set themselves to study these rules, and, what was still more important, to put them in operation. Their action for some time was watched with curiosity, and then it was denounced as wilful obstruction. But they proceeded with caution and discretion. Curiously enough, the first time I witnessed the game being played was in connection with the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877. For long hours I sat in the Speaker's Gallery watching six or seven men fighting that ill-starred proceeding. Mr. Leonard Courtenay was one of the seven; Mr. Parnell, Mr. Biggar, Mr. O'Connor Power, and Mr. Frank Hugh O'Donnell were also of the number. But the real leader of this little group, which kept the House sitting until five o'clock in the morning, was Mr. Parnell. To recall the incident sounds like a piece of ancient history; but how terribly real it all becomes in the light of the facts of to-day! The entire House was against them, just as the entire House was against Mr. Bright at the time of the Crimean War. But—the reflection is easy—Majuba, Colenso, Magersfontein, and Stormberg would all probably have been saved had this handful of men succeeded in 1877. It is admitted on all hands now that the annexation was ill-advised, that the information upon which the Government acted was defective, that just,

to use Lord Salisbury's famous admission, as we backed the wrong horse in the Crimean War, so we pursued the wrong policy in regard to the original annexation of the Transvaal in 1877. All that has followed since was due to this initial mistake. The country has spent hundreds of millions of pounds sterling, sacrificed tens of thousands of lives, and been most seriously damaged in reputation and prestige, all owing to the fatal policy against which that band of stalwarts fought till daylight streamed in at the windows on that morning. I have always been cautious in denouncing minorities since that incident. The unequal fight of that night has been a permanent object lesson for my benefit. The fight made by Mr. Parnell against flogging in the army is part of our parliamentary history. The Army Annual Bill is not an inviting bill of fare to operate upon; but upon this measure the small Irish party—a mere handful—fastened, and never let go their grip until flogging in the army had been practically abolished. In short, during all these years the lives of ministers were hardly worth living. The House frequently sat until daylight. Bills of every kind were microscopically examined and debated at length. Supply was canvassed and discussed in relentless detail. The Irish party became, not all at once, but gradually, a great parliamentary force. Rules of procedure have since been altered; the Closure has been adopted. Mr. Parnell and Mr. Biggar have both disappeared from the scene, but still the legislative highway is blocked. The wheels of the parliamentary machine will not revolve, and men, jealous for the honour of the

House of Commons, are as much at their wits' end for an effective remedy as they were in the eighties. In fact, things are worse to-day rather than better. Mr. Gladstone was a born leader of men. He had rare business aptitude. He knew the House of Commons as a skilful rider knows a horse ; and the horse knew its rider. Mr. Gladstone managed to transact a great deal of business. Now Mr. Balfour sorrowfully admits that no great contentious measure can be carried through the House of Commons. It must be taken in bits and by instalments. In proof of this it is only necessary to point to the question of Education. Admittedly the whole subject requires consideration and attention. Apart from the warring sections of the different churches, the real friends of education—the men who see in it the only chance for the people—are in despair. But two great bills introduced by Governments with majorities varying from 100 to 130 have been withdrawn, and the powerlessness of the Government to legislate has been publicly admitted. It is the same with other subjects. The House of Commons is, in reality, rapidly becoming impotent. This is the real cause of the prevailing listlessness which prevails, and of which complaint is so freely made. Men cannot be expected to take interest in an institution that is incapable of doing real work. Supply, of course, is voted—this much is a necessity. But how is it done? Perhaps there is no greater scandal in our parliamentary system. The constitutional theory is that the House of Commons controls the expenditure of every public department of the State—that it holds the power of the purse. It is a

constitutional fiction and a tremendous farce. For several years three, or at most four, days have been given—out of twenty-four allotted days—to the consideration of Irish Supply. What this means is that the discussion upon the whole of the government of Ireland—the police, education, local government, the administration of the general law, the work of the Land Commission, and scores of other things—must be compressed into three or four parliamentary days. The thing, of course, is an impossibility; and what is the result? As I write, two of these days have been exhausted in the present session. The first was spent on the salary of the Attorney-General in connection with charges of alleged jury-packing. The second day was occupied on the Chief Secretary's salary, and the administration of the Land Judges Court. A third day was given up to the Education Vote. What is the result? That four votes out of the whole number have been discussed. The remaining votes will be closed, *i.e.* they will be put from the Chair at the end of the session, and, although gross scandals may be involved, no one will be allowed to open his lips. And this is constitutionally called the granting of Supply—the most serious and most responsible work of the House of Commons. It does not require one to be a member of that Assembly to see the farce of the whole thing.¹ But much worse remains to be told. The very success of an organised Irish party in securing many of its objects has led to the

¹ On August 8, pursuant to an order of the House, estimates for various public services amounting to £67,702,651 were put from the Chair without question, debate, or discussion.

formation of what the French call groups. There is the Railway group, consisting of paid railway directors and others interested in railways. There is the Shipping group—ship-builders and ship-owners. There is the Beer group—brewers, distillers, and others interested in the drink trade. These are all groups with money interests to defend and to promote, and they form a real danger to parliamentary institutions. There is another class, of which the Church party and the Temperance party are the best examples, having no pecuniary interests to serve, and existing only for the furtherance of great causes. This system of groups had no existence twenty years ago. It is the direct creation of the tactics and success of the Irish party, and, along with general demoralisation, these groups are part of the price England has had to pay for her policy in Ireland.

Looking about for a remedy, men do not appear to make much headway. Mr. Gladstone's proposal was thorough, and would, beyond all doubt, have cleared the way, and restored the efficiency, as well as the character, of the House of Commons. Unfortunately it was weighted with other difficulties, and, in any case, it was decisively rejected, alike by Parliament and by the country. There are reformers who cry loudly for a redistribution of seats, as if the remedy for congestion of business and impotence in work lay in this direction. Under the Act of Union Ireland was guaranteed 100 members for ever. But the circumstances of England and Ireland, we are told, have changed since 1800. Undoubtedly they have changed. The population of England has increased by leaps and bounds.

On the other hand, the population of Ireland has diminished, and, unfortunately, is still diminishing. What was fair and reasonable in 1800, it is said, is not, therefore, fair and reasonable now. By the rules of arithmetic it can be proved that Ireland is over, and England under, represented. If the representation was founded upon a population basis, Ireland would lose twenty-three members, and these seats would go to the large centres of population in England—such is the story. It is, indeed, a tempting bait. What a *coup*—to get rid of twenty-three “Irish rebels,” their places in the House to be taken by twenty-three English company promoters or mammon worshippers. There is, of course, the Act of Union in the way. But inasmuch as nothing we can do now in violating that statute can exceed in villainy what we accomplished in passing it, the provisions of this measure hardly count for anything. It was violated in 1869 when the Church was disestablished; what has been done before can be done again, and so on.¹ Such is the argument one hears every day in the Press and in the Lobbies. The population of Ireland at the Union was a little more than four millions; by 1846 the population had doubled. Surely the grievance of under-representation was with Ireland then. Did anybody hear anything then of a Redistribution Bill? Was the under-representation of Ireland seriously thought of in 1832 when the Reform Bill was passed?

¹ By the Act of Union the Protestant Church was guaranteed. But the Church Act of 1869 took nothing from Ireland. The Church was disestablished and partially disendowed—nothing was taken from or out of Ireland. The revenues were distributed within the country.

Speaking before the Dublin Corporation in 1843, O'Connell dealt with this very point:—

I may mention the effect in particular localities. In Wales the population is 800,000; in Cork the rural population is 713,716. How are they respectively represented in Parliament? Wales with its 800,000 inhabitants has twenty-eight members of Parliament; the County of Cork, with nearly the same population, has but two members. Mayo with 400,000 inhabitants has but two members; Wales with 800,000, only double the number, has twenty-eight members. I will give another specimen. I will take five counties in each country to show you how the representation stands. Cumberland with a population of 126,681 has four members; Cork with a population of 713,716 has but two members. Leicestershire with a population of 197,276 has four members; Tipperary with a population of 390,598 has but two members. Northampton with a population of 179,276 has four members; Down with a population of 337,571 has but two members. Worcestershire with a population of 211,356 has four members; Tyrone with 302,945 has but two members. Galway with a population of 381,407 has two members; Wiltshire with 239,181 has four. That is to say, five English counties with a population of less than a million (953,770) have twenty members, and five Irish counties with a population of 2,116,777 have only ten representatives. That is a shame and a crime.

It is rather curious that the cry for Redistribution is only heard when the facts and figures tell against Ireland—that the representatives of England were silent upon the subject when the facts and figures were all against England.¹ But what would the application of such a remedy mean? To

¹ By the Reform Bill of 1832 five additional seats were given to Ireland. Subsequently two boroughs were disfranchised, leaving the representation at 103—the present number.

pass a Redistribution Bill through Parliament would be much more difficult than to pass a measure for Home Rule, or for the Disestablishment of the English Church. It would be resisted at every stage, fought line by line, clause by clause. It would rouse the fiercest passions in Ireland; it would mean "the gag" at every step, and, probably, the expulsion of the entire Irish party. It would probably result in the withdrawal of the Irish members, and the reign of absolute disorder in Ireland. And what, in any case, would be accomplished? It would still leave, at least, 60 Irish Nationalists in the House of Commons. This is the worst that could happen the Nationalist party. Does any one who knows the House of Commons believe that the change would make the slightest difference in facilitating the work of Parliament? For the purpose of obstruction sixty men would be as effective and as powerful as eighty. To clear the way for work, to enable the machine to run smoothly, is the object to be attained. Does the road to this end lie through disfranchisement? No; salvation does not lie this road at all. It must be found by other means and in other ways.

In times such as the present, when the country is simply drunk with the war spirit, with a Parliament largely composed of rich men who do not desire legislative reforms, and with a Government in earnest about nothing, things of course may drift along for a time. An effete Parliament with no ambitions, an Army which exists largely on paper, and a Navy about which the rumours are enough to make our hair turn grey, are not things to be proud of. And if

we add to all this a demoralised people—a people who, to a large extent, have parted with the ideals of their forefathers, a people, a large portion of whom are sodden with drink, or corrupted by gambling and vice of other kinds—the outlook is certainly not reassuring. But the country, as the politicians will some day find, is not quite dead ; it is only sleeping. We are a people yet, and the reckoning, as well as the awakening, will come. Here, and in this chapter, I am concerned only with Ireland and the House of Commons. What the country has to face in this respect is the fact that upwards of eighty members from Ireland, hostile to English interests, are encamped in the very heart of the citadel. And such men too ! Where, in the English ranks, can Mr. John Redmond be equalled ? As an orator there is no man in Parliament at the present time to come within measurable distance of him. Mr. Healy is, no doubt, what his colleagues would call “a crank,” and a man who is a law unto himself ; but for aptitude in debate, for wandering at will through the meshes of a complicated bill, for satire that cuts like a razor, the honourable and learned member for North Louth has no rival in the House of Commons. Then Mr. Dillon—what can be said of the member for East Mayo ? It was my lot in days happily gone by to withstand the honourable gentleman both in the House and on the platform. The years that have come and gone since those days, all of them crowded with glorious fight, have probably sobered both of us. We both have our ideals—I am not sure that they seriously differ, so far as general politics in Ireland are concerned ; but

where, I ask, is there in the House of Commons a better parliamentarian, a man more skilled in debate, more relentless in argument, a man more feared—I had almost said hated—by the Treasury Bench and by his opponents? Mr. William O'Brien is practically, and from a cause which every Irishman laments, out of the fight. Mr. Sexton has disappeared from public life, to the infinite loss of Ireland and of the House of Commons. Mr. T. P. O'Connor is still with us, perhaps the most versatile of all the party, and certainly, with the exception of Mr. Redmond, the most accomplished orator and debater. Mr. Blake, who relinquished a great position in Canada to stand by his country at home, grows old, but his eye is not dimmed, neither is his natural force abated. Compare these men with the representatives of Ulster—ay, with the representatives of any part of the United Kingdom. I remember, during the heat of the Home Rule struggle, Mr. Chamberlain remarking to me that, notwithstanding the grave risk the province of Ulster ran, it had produced no real native-born leader during the crisis of its fate. The remark was at once just and accurate, and it is as true to-day as it was then. But the situation is as I have described it. Every day I hear sneers at the Irish party. Most of the men, I am told, are paid. The charge is probably true, but my deliberate conviction is that a poor man paid for his services by his country is a safer guide than a bloated plutocrat who fights his way into Parliament by means of his money-bags, and who shamelessly sits there to defend the interests of his class or his trade. Then, I am told, they are

uneducated, and are not "gentlemen." In the days of the Eighty Parliament they were ostracised and called "black men." These charges are bandied about in clubs, in smoking rooms, at dinner parties, wherever "London Society" assembles. But a country which, not so long ago, made the educating of an Irish Catholic a penal offence, has no right to make the first of these complaints; and as to the second, comparisons are proverbially odious. But if a comparison has to be made, I am not sure that the Irishmen would lose by it. In any case, there these men are, the duly elected representatives of the great majority of the people of Ireland. What is to be done? Whatever fault may be found with them, they are absolutely unpurchasable. They forgo for their country's sake all the rewards that service in the English ranks would give them. Not a man in the party can be bought. They are able, even brilliant. They have discovered and developed a new method of making war upon England. Their fathers fought with pike and musket, and were worsted. These men with ballots instead of bullets, and by using the privileges of Parliament, have done more in twenty years for their country than has been done by pikes and muskets in centuries. They have not conquered England, but they brought to his knees the greatest English statesman of the century, and they have disorganised and gone very near to destroying the greatest of English institutions—her free Parliament. What then is to be done? The *Spectator* propounds the silly and impossible doctrine of going on and waiting a hundred years. Already one hundred years have

passed since, by our flagitious conduct, the Union was established. Can any one say that to-day we are one bit nearer the heart of the Irish people? Is Tipperary anything more like Kent in 1900 than it was in 1800? Things in this respect are worse rather than better. And what is there to make us believe that the patience of a whole race can be worn down? They have suffered and endured in the past. Why, if it be necessary, should they not suffer and endure in the future? I spoke not long ago to one of the most brilliant and distinguished Irishmen of the present day. I pointed out what had been done during the past thirty years—how the tone of English opinion had changed as regards Ireland, and how it was possible for the next few years to be as big with blessings as their immediate predecessors had been. His reply was discouraging in the extreme. His children were playing around us at the time. “Russell,” he said, “I do not doubt you and others like you. But look at these children. As they grow up they will be taught to love God and to hate England.” Of course I turned away in despair. There was nothing more to be said. No argument was possible. This is the outcome of centuries of bad government. This is the result of that odious and vicious land system which the Parliament of England introduced and so long upheld. How is a spirit such as this to be met? It is the spirit which exists in Ireland. It is the spirit which dominates the Irish benches at Westminster. This is the spirit which England has to meet—the spirit with which Parliament must deal. Coercion has been tried; it has failed. Justice has

had a chance ; it must be persistently applied. Ireland is awaking to a new life. The men on the Irish benches represent this new birth. The change must be frankly recognised, and even, at the price of a surrender of ideas, and of what some people would call convictions, it must be welcomed.

Here I can only sketch, and in the merest outline, a scheme of devolution of the work of the House of Commons, which, whatever its defects and shortcomings may be, would certainly lessen that pressure which now prevents anything being done. I am for an Irish Parliament at Westminster. This, it will be said, is a startling admission from one who has fought for the Union as I have done. But it is inconsistent with nothing in my past. Let any one look at the actual facts. Here are 103 Irish members in the Imperial Parliament. How do they spend their time? The Ulster minority, with one or two exceptions, laboriously spend their time in doing nothing. Between eighty and ninety of the remainder devote their time and their abilities to the work of obstructing the business of the nation, to what has become a pastime—the thwarting and impeding of all legislative work. They are forced to enliven debates that would be murderous in their dulness and dreariness but for their incursions into the field. They move reductions in estimates with which they are only remotely concerned. They force needless divisions by the score.¹ They take a

¹ During the session just closed 482 divisions were taken. The time occupied by a division depends upon the number of members present, but an average of twelve minutes will not be far from the mark. It follows that something like ten parliamentary days of nine hours each were spent in perambulating the division lobbies.

general and a benevolent interest in everything with which they have little or no concern. And it is all so cleverly done that a stranger would imagine they were the only people concerned or interested in the proceedings. Now I desire to ask, why should the Irish members not be employed discussing their own affairs? why should these able men not be set to work upon business which really concerns them, which they do understand, and for which alone they really care? Take the Irish estimates. What do the majority of English or Scottish members really care about the vote for the Irish Land Commission, the vote for the Irish Local Government Board, or even the vote for the Chief Secretary's salary? These things involve the whole fabric of Irish government; they are of enormous importance to Ireland; but they cannot, as I have shown, be even discussed.

The question I desire to ask is why these purely Irish issues should not be relegated to the Irish members. I may be told that they would disallow some of the votes altogether; but I should not give them the power to do so—that is to say, I would maintain the supervision and control of the House itself. Then they would carry reductions on other votes. Very probably, and a very good thing it would be if they did so act. Irish officials would realise for the first time in their lives that the representatives of the country they serve and tyrannise over were their masters. The government of Ireland would be for the first time a reality. I maintain that it would be perfectly possible to construct a working system by which the House of Commons at large would be freed from the work of passing

Irish votes in Committee of Supply, and of closing the remainder without any discussion whatever. And I say further, that Parliament has no manner of right to insist upon governing Ireland against the will of her people, and then to refuse the requisite facilities for discussing her methods of government. Such a course of procedure is constitutionally indefensible. Let, then, the Irish estimates go to a Standing Committee of the whole Irish members, with representatives of the Treasury and the Irish Office upon it; let them be fully discussed by this Committee. Let the Government make the case for the several votes; let them be fully and frankly considered. Of course reductions in certain votes may, under such a system, be carried. There have been times, indeed, when the whole Constabulary Vote would have been disallowed. But why should we rush to the conclusion that every Irishman is a fool? The Irish members would know that in any such case the House at large would simply restore the vote. It is not so certain that it would always restore legitimate reductions in the votes. At all events, parliamentary control would be a reality and not a sham, and Irishmen, occupied with work closely and vitally affecting their own country, would be less inclined and less able to devote their attention to work about which they care not two straws, and to successfully impede and obstruct which is the main object of their parliamentary lives. Then as to legislation by bills, why should not the same plan be adopted? In a few years the great controversies in Irish politics, apart, of course, from the National question, will be at an end. The Land Question

approaches its final and inevitable settlement ; so does the Education controversy. Apart from the issue regarding the financial relations between the two countries, and which is of an Imperial character, what remains? Absolutely nothing that seriously divides Irishmen. Reserve these great issues for the whole House, and there is nothing that a Standing Committee, consisting of the entire Irish members, could not amicably and usefully settle. There are crowds of urgent social reforms waiting ; there are numberless changes in administration that ought to be made. None of these things have even a chance in the present block ; they never will, under present circumstances, have a chance. And so Ireland and England alike suffer. It only needs a leader with courage and some business aptitude to break through the web skilfully woven around all progress to let the free institutions of a free country have full play.¹

Finally, look at what is called private business. It was but the other day I sat during the best period of the afternoon—at 3 o'clock—on an Irish Railway Bill. The great problem which the Imperial Parliament was called upon to decide upon this occasion was whether there should be a metal bridge or a level crossing at some point in the county of Kilkenny ! And to settle this momentous point the House of Commons had to leave aside great Imperial issues. It had precedence of the question of the war in South Africa, of the Finance Bill, and

¹ I see no reason why this experiment should not be tried for the three countries—the Imperial Parliament meeting on certain days for Imperial work and for the purpose of reviewing, where challenged, the work done by the representatives of each of the three countries.

of everything on the order paper for the day. It is all midsummer madness. There is nothing to be said for lunacy of this kind. Curiously enough, as I write, the bells have just rung for a division. What is it all about? The Navy Estimates are the first order of the day. The condition of the Mediterranean Fleet stands to be discussed—surely a question of first-class importance. But before the House can proceed, an Irish Provisional Order has to be discussed and dealt with. The House is crowded; it has assembled for a very different purpose; but before it can get to the orders of the day it must listen to the Irish members, and it must decide a question of adjustment of charges between the Louth County Council and the Dundalk Town Commissioners. Could the force of folly go farther? These things can surely be better settled in Ireland than at Westminster—and there they must go if Parliament is not to be the laughing-stock of the world.

I shall be told that all this signifies a rapid approach to Home Rule. I might answer that it concedes the central principle of the Home Rule demand—a reasonable control of Irish affairs by Irishmen—whilst refusing that which alone is held to make Home Rule dangerous. But whether these proposals tend one way or the other, something must be done, or the plea for an Irish Parliament will become perfectly irresistible from the standpoint of Imperial business. It is simply impossible that the present burlesque of transacting the business of the country can endure. People talk of the listlessness of a Parliament only nine months old—and no wonder. What is the real cause of this feeling? It is the sense

borne in upon business men that the whole system of parliamentary government is effete and worn out, that effective work for the good of the country is impossible, that the House of Commons exists for the sole purpose of registering the flabby decrees of the Cabinet, that the control of Parliament counts for nothing. This is what Ireland has made of the Mother of Parliaments. Wise men will do well to ponder these things before the mischief goes farther.

CHAPTER XI

THE TWO IRELANDS—THE ULSTER PROBLEM

THE settlement of South Africa is one of the great problems of the immediate future. The present calamitous war will, some day or other, come to an end: Botha will ultimately be circumvented, Delarey will make his last march, and De Wet will cease from troubling. Then the work of the statesman will really begin. There are just two possible lines of thought on the matter. One party maintains that the Dutch, when thoroughly beaten, will quietly settle down, and live in friendship and in amity with their conquerors; they will marry and be given in marriage; their children will grow up as British citizens and gradually forget the horrors of the great war. The other school believes that England is simply creating, at a great and terrible cost, another Ireland 7000 miles away from her shores, to perplex and confound the statesmen of the future; that all the problems which in Ireland are unsettled after three hundred years of effort will arise to shame us under the Southern Cross. It is not at all necessary in thus noting a current fact to discuss the South African question. It is of more importance to look

back and see what light can be thrown upon it by the so-called settlement in Ireland hundreds of years ago. There must be plenty of light and of leading for the statesmen of to-day in the storehouses of the past, if they will only avail themselves of it. Ireland, to start with, is a conquered country. The spirit of the nation recoils from the hard fact; but the stern truth must be realised—the rule and the foot of the conqueror are all over the land. From causes which have already been explained, the conquest was incomplete in the south. The west was evidently considered to be hardly worth the trouble—Cromwell bracketing it with a region which need not be named. It was in the north the great conflict and the great experiment took place. The lands of O'Neill and O'Donnell passed by forfeiture to the Crown. They were conferred by Royal Grant upon adventurers and undertakers from England and Scotland. These, in turn, brought their retainers to till and cultivate the soil. The native Irish were driven from the plains and banished to the glens and the mountains, and what is historically called the Settlement of Ulster became a great fact. But, like everything in Ireland, the work was incomplete and only half done. The Elizabethan settlers in the south, for example, might as well, so far as England's purposes were concerned, have stayed at home. The planting of great lords on the soil, most of whom cared nothing for the country, did little by way of anglicising the people. The experiment in colonisation only sowed the seeds of a bitter feud, the fruit of which has ripened to the ruin of those involved in it. Cromwell has the reputation of having been thorough in his Irish

policy—indeed it is the only ground upon which the shocking atrocities of Drogheda and Wexford can be defended ; but even the Cromwellian troopers were not proof against the witchery of the Irish race, for, when settled down on their lands, they married Irish girls, and these, faithful alike to religion and country, have reared a race more Catholic and more Irish than exists in any part of Ireland. Nothing surprised me more, when the fight over New Tipperary was being waged, than the fact that the signboards over the shops in the town bore so many English names. The fiercest of the campaigners, as well as the most prominent victims of the Plan, were the descendants of the invincible Ironsides. Not even in Ulster was the work of the conqueror complete. The counties of Antrim, Down, and Derry were practically anglicised, and they remain English to the present day. In Tyrone, Armagh, and Fermanagh the work was but half done. The counties of Donegal, Monaghan, and Cavan were barely touched. Hence to-day, leaving out of account the great and prosperous city of Belfast, Ulster, by a majority, is Irish and Catholic, notwithstanding confiscation, proscription, emigration, and all the weapons in the armoury of the conqueror. The population of the province stands at 1,581,351. The Protestant population, excluding Belfast, is 533,334. The Roman Catholics number 699,052, of which close upon 90,000 may be credited to the northern capital. To exclude Belfast in any ordinary calculation would, of course, be absurd ; it would be as rational to exclude Glasgow from Scotland, Manchester or Liverpool from England, Cardiff from

Wales. I draw attention to the figures simply to show how far the actual conquest of Ulster went, and to the point which has been reached after the expiration of three hundred years. The parliamentary representation of the province consists of thirty-three members. The Unionists count eighteen of these against fifteen Nationalists. The County Councils number nine, the majorities in six of these bodies being Unionists ; but in two—Tyrone and Fermanagh—these majorities are very slender, and they exist mainly, if not wholly, by co-opted rather than by elected representatives. Such, roughly speaking, is the political and religious complexion of Ulster at the present time. It is chiefly in this province the statesman finds, and has to deal with, the two Irelands. Elsewhere, in Dublin and throughout the south and west, the English and the Irish exist side by side, and live in comparative amity—the Roman Catholic Irish being in such overwhelming force that the very weight of numbers has produced a feeling that makes life easier and more natural than in the closely balanced regions of the north. It is in this province the religious and the party lines are closely and rigidly drawn. Nor have the ordinary influences, which usually suffice to tone down such bitter feelings, much chance. Intermarriage between Roman Catholic and Protestant is rare—indeed it is forbidden by the Church of Rome ; but the edict was scarcely required in Ulster, where such unions would be considered almost revolting. The social life of each class is lived almost wholly apart. Here in the “Black North,” according to some,

lies the hope, according to others the difficulty, of Ireland.

The problem always and ever present to the mind of the statesman in this corner of the kingdom has been complicated and greatly intensified by some comparatively modern growths and developments. The Orange Society, for example, is a great factor in the life of Ulster. I am not concerned here with either the history or the principles of the Order. It is said by its supporters to be based upon the Word of God. Orangemen are declared to be, when true to their principles, the followers of Him who went about doing good—bound by solemn obligations to love and to help their neighbours without regard to sect, creed, or party. According to the rules of the organisation, Orangemen ought everywhere to be examples of toleration in a dark and intolerant land. This may all, in theory, be true, and the ideal of the founders of the institution may have been what I have sketched ; but when all this is admitted, it is equally certain that no society, professing such noble principles, has ever been more sadly or more completely misunderstood, that no body of men have ever apparently been at less pains to exemplify these principles in their public lives. And if the founders of the institution aimed at universal brotherhood, their failure has been complete and unquestionable. Too often in its history the Orange Society has brought, not peace, but a sword. Too often it has produced, not love, but hate ; not good feeling, but bitter animosities. When, however, all this has been said, it must be fairly admitted that the rank and file of the organisation have no selfish aims ;

they have no axe to grind ; they are Protestants. By their annual celebrations they seek to recall great events in the history of the country. Derry and the Boyne are stirring memories, and Macaulay was no doubt right when he declared that the nation which forgot such events would be incapable of achieving anything resembling them. Protestantism also symbolises a great revolt against the coercion of the conscience. And in so far as Orangeism simply recalls great facts in history, and seeks to impress upon the people the priceless value of that for which our fathers struggled, there is no room for complaint of any kind. But what men everywhere feel to-day is that, with civil and religious liberty assured and secure, the Orangemen are in danger of falling a prey to men whose aims are less noble than their own, whose interests, besides being purely personal and selfish, are against public policy and the general good. The interest of the Irish landlords in Protestantism may be all that some people would have us believe. Their anxiety about the integrity of the Empire may be of the most burning description. There is, however, and in spite of all this, a shrewd suspicion abroad that the Order is now being used for sectional purposes, and that the securing of the landlord's rent, and not the supremacy of Protestantism, is the great object of the leaders. The Orangemen will have only themselves to blame if they allow the institution, of which they are so proud, to be used for other purposes than those intended by its founders.

The great, the overwhelming difficulty to be met with in Ulster is what people insist upon calling

“the religious question.” This extraordinary feeling exists nowhere else in Ireland. It is the inevitable outcome of the conditions attendant upon the original settlement of the country. I have lived some thirty-five years in the metropolis, I know the south and west fairly well, and I cannot recall during that whole period anything resembling the ferocity of “religious” feeling which disfigures the city of Belfast and its immediate neighbourhood. In that great city—for it is a great city—full of industrial life, studded with churches of every kind, with far more than an average of Christian agencies and activities at work, why is it that this spirit prevails? Within the last fifty years Belfast has been disfigured by shameful and calamitous riots—riots in which Catholic and Protestant have fought great and sanguinary battles. The dead, the maimed, and the injured in these conflicts have been counted by hundreds. The city has over and over again been given over to military law. Commission after commission has sat, taken evidence and reported. And it is doubtful whether, after all this, the feeling between the two parties is one whit better to-day than it was when the city was practically under military law, and in a state of siege. What does it all mean? Who is to blame? Clearly we must get behind the rioters to find an answer to this question. Why do so many people in Ireland profess such a terrible anxiety about the eternal welfare of Roman Catholics? This has always been a question pressing upon my mind. I am an unflinching Protestant. My whole soul rises in revolt against a religion symbolised by forms and

outward pomp. But what of that? This spirit is part of my nature—of my very life and being; but this does not cause me to shut my eyes to the fact that all this symbolism which to me means just nothing at all, may mean a great deal to souls more devout, to minds differently constituted to my own. Why then should I object? Why should I deride? And when in a Roman Catholic country like Ireland great societies are formed openly and ostensibly for the conversion of Irish Roman Catholics, what am I to think? What does it mean? So far as I know, the devout Roman Catholic believes everything which the devout Protestant believes. They both hold fast by the great verities of the Christian religion. The Fatherhood of God, the Divinity of the Son, the necessity of repentance and of a clean life—all the fundamentals of the religion of Jesus Christ are held in common by both churches. The real difference is that the Roman Catholic believes much more than the Protestant. Where then, so far as mere belief is concerned, is the necessity for what is called conversion? Does not the greater include the less? Surely the maximum includes the minimum. But, of course, the Protestant controversialist will be quick to reply that those whom they seek to save live godless, hopeless, joyless lives. No doubt. But are there not Protestants in profusion who live under exactly the same conditions? Why not begin at Jerusalem? Let these men, anxious, as they doubtless are, to serve and to glorify God, begin with the lost sheep of their own household. Their hearts are in the right place; it is their heads that are wrong. Their whole

judgment is perverted by a horror of what they call Romanism. They circumvent heaven and earth to make a single proselyte, and when they imagine they have secured their prey, he turns out, times without number, to be ten times more a child of the devil than he was before. They fight for and contend about the custody of some poor waif as if its eternal destiny depended upon the result. The truth is, and it needs to be plainly said, all this machinery for the conversion of Irish Roman Catholics, which arouses such bitter feeling in parts of Ireland, is utterly mischievous to the best interests of the country. It is grossly insulting to a Catholic, and at bottom a deeply religious, people who have clung to their faith through ages of persecution—a people who have been grossly wronged by their rulers, and who deeply resent being thus insulted by their fellow-citizens.

And who are these people who fight these squalid battles on the streets of Belfast in the name of Protestantism? Protestants, forsooth! If the truth must be told, they rarely enter a church door; they never subscribe a sixpence for the furtherance of any form of religion; they bellow on the streets about the Pope and about the Protestant religion. The public-house is their temple; the publican is their great high-priest. They preach a gospel of hate and of hatred that would disgrace a race of savages, a gospel of which the Christian religion knows absolutely nothing. This is the spirit which disfigures the great northern capital, and discredits the entire province. Its grosser exhibitions are almost entirely confined to Belfast, Portadown, and one or two similar

centres ; but the spirit of the thing is everywhere throughout the province. It takes innumerable shapes ; but hatred of popery, and even of "papists," is everywhere. I remember, in one of my election campaigns, being called upon to discuss the Catholic University question with a more than ordinarily intelligent farmer. We argued the question in and out, and after I had driven him from every stronghold of prejudice, he exclaimed, "You know, sir, what them papists are. They must be kept down, or we cannot live in the country." This is the whole sum and substance of the matter. The spirit of ascendancy is at the bottom of it all. Equality of rights and of citizenship cannot be endured. It was of no avail for me to tell my friend and constituent that I lived in a Roman Catholic city, under a Roman Catholic municipality, and that I was sensible of no grievance. It was enough that the dreaded "papists" were getting their heads up. Nothing is really possible until this spirit is allayed. It ought to be the aim and object of all good citizens to get rid of it at any cost and at any sacrifice.

It will, no doubt, be pointed out that this northern province has prospered and gone forward in spite of these drawbacks, and that other parts of Ireland more happily circumstanced have stood still, or even retrograded and gone back. This is quite true. But Ulster has gone forward, not because, but in spite of, this dead-weight which, so far as it has operated at all, has weighed her down. It is not the captains of industry, it is not the farmers, it is not the traders, who bring this disgrace upon the

province. And the reasons for the amazing progress of some parts of the province are not far to seek. Belfast commercially is, of course, a standing wonder. Glasgow multiplied its population eight times between 1801 and 1891; Belfast, in the same period, multiplied its population thirteen and a half times. Dublin was a great city when Belfast was a small town. In 1821 the population of the Irish metropolis was 185,881; in the same year Belfast stood at 37,277. To-day the figures are completely reversed, Dublin standing at 286,328, whilst Belfast counts up to 348,876. This progressive and prosperous city is the seat of more than one great industry. Ship-building employs thousands of skilled artisans. The linen trade employs thousands more, skilled and unskilled. The development of the port has been something marvellous. A straight channel has been cut right from the harbour to the deep sea, and through this waterway the largest vessels can come up direct to the very heart of the city. It was inevitable that the growth of a great city like Belfast should ease things throughout all the province, and that it should especially lessen the pressure and the burden upon the land. The fact is that Belfast is packed full of farmers' sons—the ministers, the professional men, the traders, and the labourers being largely drawn from the agricultural districts. The development of this marvellous hive of industry has doubtless been the principal factor in the making of Ulster.

But other causes have largely contributed to this end. Writing in June 1892 upon this question, I said :—

Among the many misapprehensions current concerning Ulster, none is more common than that the condition of the people of that province is exceptional and different from that of Irishmen in the other portions of the country. The Ulster farmer, for example, is generally supposed to be a totally different person from the farmer of the south and west. And so in many respects he is ; but in the main, his position is the same, although his environment—if I may use such a phrase—is somewhat different. Politicians frequently talk on this basis of the small holdings of the south and west. But Ulster is in reality the province where small holdings most largely prevail. And there, if anywhere, the experiment about which so much is now being said has been fairly, and, on the whole, successfully worked out. In 1890, out of a total of 564,803 holdings in Ireland, 199,425 were in Ulster. No fewer than 101,285 of these were under 15 acres in extent, and 78,549 others, while over 15, were under 50 acres. In Munster, on the other hand, out of 123,770 holdings, only 42,920 were under 15 acres, and 46,099 were above 15 and under 50. The figures for Leinster are a little higher, and when we come to Connaught extremes may be said to meet, the extensive sheep runs and the peasants' patch making up a somewhat incongruous total. But however the figures may be viewed, the fact stands clearly out that Ulster, above and beyond all the other provinces, is the home of the small holder.—*Daily Graphic*, June 14, 1892.

In this connection, however, it ought never to be forgotten that, whilst the farmers of the other three provinces held their land as tenants at will, those of Ulster held under the Custom ; that, whilst their fellow-countrymen were evicted without scruple, they had comparative security of tenure ; and that, compared with the rents elsewhere, their rents were often fair and reasonable. It is to the security under the

Custom that rural Ulster undoubtedly owes much of its prosperity.

And, again, it need not be denied, or even questioned, that the characteristics of the colonising race have told heavily in favour of the North. It is in Antrim, Down, and Derry where this influence is most plainly discernible. The settlers in these counties were mainly Scotch. The people are overwhelmingly Presbyterian to-day. The original settlers had no doubt enormous advantages. They received the best of the land; they had rights and privileges denied to the native Irish. But they brought to their new position those great qualities which have marked the Scot wherever he has gone and which have told in his favour all over the world. When they entered into possession of their inheritance the province was little better than a wilderness. It had been devastated by fire and sword, just as South Africa is being devastated at the present time. It was a hard and stubborn soil to conquer, but these men put their backs into the work, and they made it to blossom as the rose. These neat and tidy cottages which the traveller sees as he travels throughout Ulster, the whitewash of which is religiously renewed every July, have a great history. They tell of a giant struggle against difficulties, of heroic endurance, of hard and honest work. It is from these modest centres the influence has come that makes Ulster stand out as the great imperial province to-day; and England will be wise if she pays heed to the demand issuing therefrom at the present time.

It was impossible in a work of this character to

shut out of sight the great outstanding difficulty of what is called the religious question in Ulster ; but there is abundant evidence that the spirit which I have described is losing something of its hold on the people. Face to face with the great and pressing problems of daily life—problems which affect Protestant and Catholic alike—men of all creeds are beginning to look facts in the face. The chief of these problems is the Land. Here the interest of Catholic and Protestant coincides. Rent is no respecter of persons ; it affects all alike. When the crop fails both parties suffer. A bad legal decision in the case of a Catholic tenant rules the case of the Protestant farmer as well. The interest of the two classes in the land is a common interest, and the remedy for the land grievance is the same in the north as it is in the south. This fact is being slowly realised, and is bringing the people closer to each other. The Pope may be a very terrible person, but, as John Mitchell once observed, His Holiness has no writs out in Ulster. Necessity is a somewhat hard taskmaster ; but the lesson is being learned. Hence at the great Land Purchase Convention held at Belfast on June 5 last, no sentiment was more frantically endorsed than that which appealed for the union of Catholic and Protestant in face of a common danger and to secure a common end. The Convention was attended by 6000 of the farming class—a large number of those present being Roman Catholics. For once the city of Belfast witnessed the union of Irishmen ; for once the two parties, so long and so bitterly hostile, met, agreed upon a policy, were harmonious and enthusiastic.

And just as the land has in the past been the root and source of almost every trouble, so in the future it may turn out to be the means by which peace, amity, and goodwill will be secured.

Other influences, all tending in the same direction, are also at work. The Local Government Act is loudly denounced: it has raised the rates; it has driven the gentry from public life; it has displaced Protestants and put Roman Catholics in their place. All this wailing comes from the derelicts of the old ascendancy party. The Act may probably have done all these things; democratic government is never cheap. The gentry, with all their sympathies and interests hostile to the people, were bound to go. And in a Roman Catholic country, ascendancy was bound, sooner or later, to be assailed and beaten. But the Act is doing a great and a needed work altogether outside the administrative sphere. It is bringing men to work together for the common good. They are learning that everything does not belong to the domain of party, that there is much outside its borders upon which all good citizens can agree to the infinite betterment of the country. The result is that public life is being sweetened. Men who formerly posed as local and noisy politicians are being trained to perform public duties, and men, by contact in such affairs, learn to think better and more kindly of each other. This reform is more marked in another sphere. Mr. Horace Plunkett, labouring for the development of agriculture, is doing a mighty work in this direction. The Protestant and Roman Catholic farmers join heartily in establishing and working co-operative creameries,

in forming co-operative societies of other kinds, and in the establishment of banks designed to supplant the gombeen man and the money-lender. The truth is that men are now working together for various purposes in Ireland who never met before. Every day they meet they learn to think better of each other. They learn the need Ireland has for the frank co-operation of all her sons. They probably realise how absurd and mischievous their past feuds have been. If the press and the pulpit were to combine in aiding this great work of reconciliation, that which may take fifty years to accomplish might be done in half the time. As yet there is little sign of the budding spring in either of these great agencies. To a large extent they block the way—doing all in their power to hinder and impede the great reform. But the forces at work in favour of the new awakening are greater than those fighting against it, and our children may confidently look forward to a new and better Ireland.

CHAPTER XII

HOW THE UNION CAN BE MAINTAINED

THE closing chapter of this volume must necessarily partake somewhat of the nature of a review of the whole situation. In these pages I have traced, roughly but sufficiently, the political history of Ireland since the Union. My aim has been to set naught down in malice, to extenuate nothing. My own view of the work culminating in 1800 is that it was disgraceful in the extreme. Men to-day with their flabby morals and degenerate souls may call the bribery of the boroughmongers an act of indemnity; they may count the wholesale creation of peers and the dismissal of officials as necessary acts. I call it all perfidy of the deepest dye—perfidy for which England ought to hang her head in shame before the world. But the Act of Union is a Statute of the Realm; it has existed, as such, for one hundred years, and reasonable men must take a practical view of the facts. I have pointed out that Fox and Grey—the two great English opponents of the Union—refused to join in any movement for Repeal—the latter especially lending not the slightest countenance to O'Connell's agitation. Two great

national crusades for an Irish Parliament—one led by O'Connell, the other by Mr. Gladstone—have also failed to secure public support. And, believing as I do that it is possible to make the Parliament of the United Kingdom a greater blessing to Ireland than any native assembly could ever, under existing circumstances, become, I continue to rank myself with the Unionist party. But in doing so I venture to make an explanation upon two points. When the question was formally raised, when in 1886 I went out to fight for the Union on the platforms of Great Britain, I did so under two serious misconceptions. I believed in the Irish landlords; I did not believe in the Irish leaders. My views have been completely changed on both these issues. I thought that the Irish landlords were Unionists on high political grounds; that they were fighting for the country's good, not their own. I do not think this to-day. On the contrary, I have come to the conclusion, slowly but surely, that in pretending to fight for the Union, these men were simply fighting for their own interests—that Rent, and not Patriotism, was their guiding motive. The position taken by the landlord party from 1895 to 1900 first caused me to doubt. During this period, and as a class, the landlords were arrayed against every reform. They opposed the Land Act of 1896; they were hostile to the Local Government Act of 1898. They did not oppose the Agriculture and Industries Bill, but they helped to turn Mr. Horace Plunkett out of Parliament, and in this way ran the risk of defeating the whole policy of the measure. At the election of 1900 they and their friends deliberately secured

the loss of two Unionist seats in Dublin, and did their best to wreck another in Ulster. Looking on at all this work, I have been compelled to revise my opinions, and I have arrived at the conclusion that the great bulk of the Irish landlords are merely conditional Unionists—that, given an occasion demanding it, they would join the National party against England. A party which deliberately proposed to give away, at a time of crisis, three out of twenty seats cannot be counted very loyal. Then I confess that I wholly misjudged the Irish leaders. I had lived through the horrors of the Land League period—had supped of them to the full every morning and every night. I had done a citizen's duty as a special juror in Dublin—had been boycotted and seriously injured in my calling. I had watched and resisted the Plan of Campaign, fighting its boycotting edicts, and had been the medium of supplying some of those assailed with money to enable them to live through it—I had even aided in a new plantation scheme against it. Under all these circumstances my judgment was more or less warped and influenced, and I came to the conclusion that an Irish Parliament was impossible with such leaders as were then at the front. Let me frankly say that I misjudged most of these men. I said strong and bitter things against them—I felt all I said. I would not say these things to-day. The atrocities of the Land League time were appalling—for no end in the world would I consent to endorse or even to palliate such actions. The horrors of the Plan of Campaign were terrible and revolting—these I witnessed with my own eyes. And I am no believer in the doctrine

that the end justifies the means; but whilst I strongly condemn all the sad work of these years, what am I to think of the English Government which could be convinced of justice by no means short of all this crime and outrage? For I say deliberately, and with knowledge, that had the Land League not been formed, had the Plan of Campaign not come into operation, the Land Code of Ireland would have been to-day the barbarous and inhuman instrument which it has been my duty to depict all through these pages. Towards the close of the eighties I had a memorable private interview with Mr. Parnell. It was not of my seeking. The injustice of the land system was rankling in my mind at the time, and, seizing his opportunity, Mr. Parnell pleaded with me to stop what he called my war against Ireland—to come over and help the Nationalist party. We both spoke our minds plainly. I told him what I thought of the League, of the Plan, and all the rest of it, and I succeeded in eliciting the great leader's views, which did not differ materially from my own. I was vehement, Mr. Parnell was calm. The interview resulted in nothing save a great memory for me, and as we parted the Irish leader said: "Well, think it all over, and remember there will always be an open door for *you*." I have thought it all over many times since that night, and I plead guilty to having grievously misjudged the Irish leaders. Had I been an Irish Catholic, had my ancestors suffered as the Irish Catholics suffered, had my country been oppressed, neglected, and plundered as their country was for seventy years—I do not go behind the Union—I should,

had I escaped the gallows, been against England. No Catholic Irishman, reading the history of his country from 1800 to 1870, could be anything save a rebel. It is my deliberate conviction that English Unionists have all along erred owing to the standpoint from which they have viewed the Irish question. They have not made the necessary allowances for a people so grossly wronged. They have dealt with the case as if England and not Ireland had the right to feel aggrieved and to complain. I have changed my standpoint. Having read Irish history over again, and with more pains, I see things in a wholly different light—hence my change of view. I understand men like Mr. Dillon, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Healy, and Mr. Redmond for the first time. I do not agree in all their aims and aspirations, but I can feel something of what they feel—even to the scorn they must have for some of the present-day representatives of their conquerors, the dull, smug, ignorant plutocrats of this age of brass.

But I confess to a feeling not shared by the representatives of the Irish people. These men profess to care nothing for England or for England's empire, and it is precisely at this point one of my chief difficulties arises. English statesmen, previous to 1800, considered the Union to be a necessity from the standpoint of empire. It is so in my opinion to-day. Then England was fighting her way through a great European war. Ireland was her weak point—and it was Ireland, be it remembered, with an independent Parliament. The circumstances of to-day are analogous. England is at war, not with a

great first-class European power; she is at war with two small states, 7000 miles from her shores. What this war has meant everybody knows. It has strained our resources; it has denuded the country of fighting men, and it is still unsettled. Let any one imagine foreign complications arising. Where is the weak point of the Empire? Where would a foreign enemy receive most sympathy? Everybody knows. Ireland is our main danger under such circumstances. And for England to be controlled, or even hampered, by an Irish Parliament in the midst of a war against a foreign power is simply unthinkable. Hence the necessity of a United Empire amid these stormy seas. Let nobody say that this argument is far-fetched, and that such a war is improbable if not impossible. If this country escapes such a calamity within the next five-and-twenty years, it will have abundant reason to be thankful. And when such a war is waged it will be a life and death struggle—a struggle for national existence. I cannot see, therefore, how, from this point of view, an Irish Parliament is possible—how England can ever assent to it.

But whilst taking up this position, it cannot be denied that, viewed from a parliamentary standpoint, the present situation is hopeless and quite impossible. Whatever comes or goes, things cannot go on as they are at present at Westminster. Let any thinking man—whatever his views may be—consider the position. The Empire is governed by the Parliament at Westminster; it is in reality governed by the House of Commons. Whatever its decisions may be—wise or unwise—they are felt,

not alone in Great Britain and Ireland, they are felt to the uttermost ends of the earth. This free Parliament has wisely divested itself of the task of governing, and of legislating for, the colonies which own the sway of the King. It has thrown the reins of self-government on their necks and told them to go their own way. But even with this relief the machine is carrying a load under which a breakdown is certain to take place. We are just closing the first session of a new Parliament. Such a period ought to be the very halcyon time of its existence—the time for great work and of high resolves. This Parliament is already listless and half dead. And what has been done? The Address has been voted, the Budget has been submitted, and the Finance Bill passed; the Civil List has been settled; a Bill to continue the Agricultural Rates Act and a Factory and Workshop Bill have become law. The Supply for the year has also been voted in the manner I have elsewhere described. And this is, in reality, all that has been accomplished. Great social issues await treatment. The question of local taxation is in a chaotic condition. The licensing problem is rapidly becoming a social danger. The reform of the poor-law, the provision for old age, the housing of the people, the reconstruction of our education system, and a hundred other questions are thundering at our gates. Nothing can be done; the machine will not work; the wheels refuse to go round. Men go to the House in the morning and return home at night disgusted and disappointed. They ask how long such a farce is to endure?

There can be no manner of doubt that Ireland is at the root of all this difficulty. I am far from either thinking or saying that the most is got out of the machine by those at present responsible for its working—no man who knows the House of Commons can think so—but the sand which clogs the machinery comes mainly from Ireland. It is the eighty Nationalist representatives from Ireland who are responsible for the breakdown. The question arising, then, is far from being simple. Is the Irish problem insoluble unless by Repeal of the Union? I am wholly unwilling to admit this. Mr. Parnell once refused to set any limits to the march of a nation. And Mr. Parnell was right. But those who seek to take the kingdom of heaven by violence and by force are mistaken. Progress of every kind must in these days be slow. Knowledge is too wide-spread; opinions are too strongly held; prejudices are far too ingrained for any party to carry everything its own way all at once. The Irish question must be faced bit by bit. But let any one assume the Land Question settled, and settled upon terms fair and just alike to landlord and tenant; assume that the claims of the Roman Catholic Church in regard to education have been liberally treated; that an understanding has been arrived at in regard to the financial relations between the two countries—what great issue is left for Irishmen in Ireland to fight about? what is really left of great political importance for England to do in Ireland? With these three elements eliminated the Irish problem would pass to a totally new stage. There would, of course, be plenty of domestic

and social questions to occupy attention, but upon these men would agree and differ just as they do in England and in Scotland—the combustible material would have disappeared. Add to this a rearrangement of procedure at Westminster such as I have outlined, and under which Irishmen would feel that they had a real if a reasonable control over Irish affairs, and there would arise a new heaven and a new earth.

I altogether decline to take the view that the Irish problem is insoluble unless on Home Rule lines. I do not believe it. After a bloody civil war the citizens of the Northern and Southern States of America sit in the same legislative halls. They have drawn a sponge across the past. They have forgotten those stricken fields where so much of history was written. Why should reconciliation between England and Ireland be deemed impossible? Why should a country which has secured the passionate loyalty of her colonies in every part of the world despair of Ireland at her own doors? Great responsibilities lie at once upon English rulers and the Irish people. Let English statesmen set their house in order. If the great duty of governing a country with, in some respects, a nobler history than their own, is cast upon them, let them so act as to deserve praise and not blame. Let them cease to look upon Ireland as an English county. Let them be just as well as firm. Let them not forget the past with its long night of darkness and despair, in the light of the present with its dower of privilege and blessing. And let not Irishmen forget that they, too, have great duties cast upon them. Let the

Irish Nationalist remember the truth which a great Irishman¹ has so well expressed :—

Each nation master at its own fireside—

The claim is just, and so one day 'twill be ;

But a wise race the time of fruit will bide,

Nor pluck th' unripen'd apple from the tree.

And let the Irish Unionist bear in mind what is his real place in the Ireland of to-day—that he is one of a small minority in a land which is occupied by his class solely by right of conquest. Let him not only strive as much as in him lies to live at peace with all men—let him so live that his presence in the land will make for the great reconciliation, for the peace that endureth. The forces arrayed against this reconciliation, which stand in hostile array to this peace, need not be under-estimated. They are at once great and powerful. The North is the principal field of their activity. Let any great movement for the welfare of all classes of the people be launched ; let anything which seeks to bring Catholic and Protestant together take hold of the popular mind—at once the demon of discord is let loose. Fifty years ago it was the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill ; to-day it is the King's Oath—the mysteries of transubstantiation, the alleged adoration of saints, and all those questions over which theologians spend their time. To-morrow it may be the question of a Roman Catholic University—the right of Irish Catholics to that form of higher education which they can conscientiously accept. Whatever it may be, there is always at such times a cry to

¹ Dr. Ingram, *Sonnets and other Poems*, p. 100.

distract the mind, to split up parties in Ulster. Unless I wholly mistake the signs of the times, these cries will be raised in vain in the future. A new birth has taken place. A new spirit has been awakened. The people are at last alive to the fact that they have been used for a purpose and for ends other than the public good. The union of all classes and creeds to secure an honest settlement of the land means, in the end, a combination for the common weal—a combination that will break up and destroy that spirit of faction which has so long stood between parties and degraded the country. For myself, I find my own thoughts fully and accurately expressed by the gifted author of "Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight" when, in the volume from which I have already quoted, he says—

Unhappy Erin, what a lot was thine !
 Half conquered by a greedy robber band ;
 Ill govern'd with now lax, now ruthless hand ;
 Misled by zealots, wresting laws divine
 To sanction every dark or mad design ;
 Lured by false lights of pseudo-patriot league
 Thro' crooked paths of faction and intrigue,
 And drugged with selfish flattery's poison'd wine.
 Yet, reading all thy mournful history,
 Thy children, with a mystic faith sublime,
 Turn to the future, confident that Fate,
 Become at last thy friend, reserves for thee,
 To be thy portion in the coming time,
 They know not what—but surely something great.

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